



# COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

## 1. Statement of Policy

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is committed to ensuring a safe working environment for our employees and vulnerable members of the public that they serve. The GNWT is equally committed to ensuring the safety of residents of remote communities who may have more limited access to health care.

The GNWT will promote and ensure effective practices, training and supports are in place to protect the physical and mental health, safety and well-being of its employees, as well as the safety of its residents, especially vulnerable members of society, who may be required to interact with government employees.

## 2. Principles

The GNWT will adhere to the following principles when implementing this Policy:

- (1) As an employer in the Northwest Territories (NWT), the GNWT is committed to protecting the safety of vulnerable members of society served by the GNWT.
- (2) In accordance with the *Safety Act*, the GNWT has a duty to take all reasonable precautions and to adopt and carry out all reasonable techniques and procedures to ensure the health and safety of its employees and workplaces.
- (3) GNWT management and employees share the right and responsibility to be part of and maintain healthy and safe government workplaces. This includes the prevention and mitigation of hazards in the workplace, the prevention of harm, and the promotion of well-being.
- (4) The GNWT recognizes that privacy and trust are particularly important where health information is concerned. Personal information is protected by provisions of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (ATIPPA) associated with its collection, use, disclosure and protection.

## 3. Scope

This Policy and the applicable guidelines apply to all GNWT departments and agencies, except for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.



## Definitions

The following terms apply to this Policy:

COVID-19 – or Coronavirus disease is an infectious respiratory illness caused by a newly discovered coronavirus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Deputy Head – the Deputy Minister of a department, the Chief Executive Officer of a public committee, board or council, or such a person may be appointed or designated as Deputy Head.

Designated Employees – means all those persons identified in the guidelines developed pursuant to section 4(g)i, and includes:

- a. members of the public service providing services with or without remuneration to vulnerable members of the public while on duty; and,
- b. individuals engaged to provide services with or without remuneration on behalf of the GNWT who provide services to vulnerable members of the public while providing these services.

Fully Vaccinated – means persons who have received the full series of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine or a combination of accepted vaccines at least 14 full days prior to the day on which the proof of vaccination is submitted.

Mental (Psychological) Health – includes the emotional, psychological and social well-being of a person. A state of well-being is defined when the individual realizes their own abilities, is resilient to the normal stresses of life, can work productively and can contribute to their community.

Occupational Health and Safety – matters related to the health and safety of employees and visitors, while in GNWT workplaces.

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations – form part of the legislation that, along with the *Safety Act*, governs workplace health and safety.

Safety Act – is the act that governs workplace health and safety in the Northwest Territories. It requires employers to take all reasonable precautions to ensure the health and safety of its workplaces.

Vulnerable Members of the Public – means persons who are in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 than the general population. A person's age, disability, ability to be vaccinated, ability to access health care in their community of residence, or other circumstances (whether temporary or permanent), can make someone vulnerable.



## 4. Authority and Accountability

### **General**

This Policy is issued under the authority of the Financial Management Board. The authority to make exceptions and approve revisions to this Policy rests with the Financial Management Board.

Authority and accountability are further defined as follows:

(a) Minister of Finance (Minister)

The Minister of Finance is accountable to the Financial Management Board for the implementation of this Policy.

(b) Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister of Finance is accountable to the Minister for the administration of this Policy.

### **Specific**

(c) Financial Management Board

The Financial Management Board may approve the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy.

(d) Minister of Finance

The Minister may recommend amendments and exceptions to the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy to the Financial Management Board.

(e) Deputy Minister of Finance

The Deputy Minister of Finance may recommend to the Minister of Finance appropriate corporate guidelines and propose amendments to the guidelines. Guidelines may include:

- i. Specific criteria to determine which employees and positions are considered to provide service to vulnerable members of the public;
- ii. Measures to protect the safety of employees and vulnerable members of the public where GNWT employees who interact with vulnerable members of the public are not vaccinated; and
- iii. Procedures to be put in place to protect the security and confidentiality of records, specifically those including personal information, in accordance with the *ATIPPA*.

(f) Minister Responsible for the Public Service Act

The Minister responsible for the *Public Service Act* is accountable for the management and direction of the Public Service and for ensuring that GNWT departments and agencies operate in accordance with this Policy and associated guidelines.



- (g) Deputy Heads
- i. Ensure the development, implementation and operation of appropriate departmental vaccination guidelines and procedures in their respective departments and agencies' workplaces;
  - ii. Ensure appropriate communication of the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy and accompanying corporate and departmental guidelines and/or procedures to staff;
  - iii. Ensure that the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy is implemented in accordance with corporate and departmental guidelines and procedures; and
  - iv. Monitor the effectiveness of the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy and accompanying departmental guidelines and procedures.

## 5. Provisions

### (1) Proof of Vaccination

GNWT employees and contractors providing services to Vulnerable Members of the Public will be required to provide a COVID-19 vaccination record from Public Health. This documentation will be used to verify the employee's vaccination status, which will be recorded for the purpose of minimizing risks to other employees and vulnerable members of the public who may come in contact with employees in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case.

All documents and information relating to an employee's or contractor's vaccination status are to be treated with the utmost confidentiality according to applicable privacy legislation.

All designated employees will be required to be fully vaccinated with a full series of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine by November 30, 2021.

Vaccination records from public health showing dates of vaccination must be provided.

### (2) Other Measures

Designated employees who choose not to be vaccinated, who are not fully immunized or do not provide proof of vaccination by November 30, 2021, will be required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the workplace and undergo regular testing for COVID-19 until they are fully vaccinated. Regular testing may be required up to three times a week for employees and includes the requirement to provide proof of a negative test result before they can resume working.

Employees who refuse to wear PPE or are unable to provide proof of a negative test could be asked to take a leave without pay until they do so.

### (3) Accommodations will be made for employees who are unable to be vaccinated or undergo regular COVID-19 testing for medical reasons or based on protected grounds under the *Human Rights Act*.



(4) Job duties/Types of Employment

Proof of vaccination is required for all appointments and placements to positions based on established job duties that provide service to Vulnerable Members of the Public in the healthcare, education, and corrections sectors.

Proof of vaccination may be required for any type of employment, including volunteer employment with no remuneration.

Employees moving to a different position within the GNWT that provide service to Vulnerable Members of the Public in the healthcare, education and correction sectors will be required to submit proof of vaccination prior to commencing work in their new position.

(5) Duty Travel

Proof of vaccination is required for all employees travelling to remote communities on duty travel.

Employees travelling to remote communities on duty travel will be required to submit proof of vaccination prior to departing on duty travel.

Employees travelling to remote communities who choose not to be vaccinated, who are not fully immunized or do not provide proof of vaccination before departing on duty travel, will be required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the duration of their time in the community, including when they are off duty. They will also be required to undergo regular testing for COVID-19 until they are fully vaccinated or until their return to their home community. Regular testing may be required up to three times a week for full-time employees who regularly travel to remote communities and includes the requirement to provide proof of a negative test result before each duty travel departure.

Employees who refuse to wear PPE or are unable to provide proof of a negative test could be asked to take a leave without pay until they do so.

(6) Confidentiality

The confidentiality of information obtained through the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy will be handled in accordance with the provisions of the ATIPPA associated with the collection, use, disclosure and protection of personal information.

Access to documents and information relating to an employee's or contractor's vaccination status will be on a need-to-know basis and restricted to only the specific individuals necessary to carry out the implementation of this Policy and associated guidelines.



(7) Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed by the Department of Finance no later than six months after it comes into force. This policy will be updated as required and as reasonable in the evolving nature of the pandemic, vaccine availability and government and public health authority direction.

## **6. Prerogative of the Financial Management Board**

Nothing in this Policy shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Financial Management Board to make decisions or take action with respect to the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy.