

# Kingston Health Sciences Centre

## ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY MANUAL

**Subject: COVID-19 Staff and Affiliate Vaccination**

**Number: 02-199**

Prepared by: Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness

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Issued by: President and Chief Executive Officer

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### **Policy**

As a tertiary and acute health care organization caring for vulnerable and medically complex patients, KHSC has a moral and professional responsibility to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of our patients. We also have a legislative duty to take every reasonable precaution for the protection of our workers under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act*. COVID-19 vaccination reduces the introduction and transmission of COVID-19 within our environment and protects individuals against severe illness, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccine requirements apply to all KHSC staff (employees and physicians/credentialed staff) and affiliates (students/learners, volunteers, researchers, contractors, vendors, and service providers), as described within, and are not intended to conflict with any relevant collective agreement and/or employment agreement.

**COVID-19 mandatory vaccination requirement** is as follows:

1. Documentation of having received a COVID-19 primary vaccine series, **OR**
2. For those not vaccinated with an initial primary series, receipt of one dose of the current COVID-19 vaccine within the past 6 months.

**COVID-19 recommended vaccinations** are as follows:

1. Vaccination with a current COVID-19 vaccine, 6 months following either a prior COVID-19 vaccine or a confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection, with 3 months being the minimum interval particularly for those who are considered immunocompromised.

Protection from COVID-19 vaccination decreases over time. Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines increase your defenses by boosting your immune response to restore protection that may have diminished over time. This helps to increase protection against symptomatic infection and severe health outcomes at the individual level and reduces the potential for transmission. Staff and affiliate vaccination is important not only for the well-being of our staff, but it reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission to the vulnerable patient populations we care for at KHSC. Age is a very important risk factor for severe disease. The risk of hospitalization and intensive care admission increases with age.

For more information on COVID-19 vaccination see the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance](#) (December 23, 2023 ).

Should individuals have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, they are encouraged to speak with their primary care physician and/or KHSC Occupational Health Nurse, or access vaccine information on the [Public Health website](#).

This policy is not withstanding the wide authority that the Medical Officer of Health has under the Health Protection and Promotion Act (1990).

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### **Definitions:**

**Affiliates:** all non-employee and non-physician/non-credentialed staff including, but not limited to, students/learners, contractors and service providers, vendors, researchers, and volunteers (including Board members, patient advisors and other volunteers).

**Contractors:** includes third parties that KHSC has an established contract or purchased service agreement with, or otherwise engages or retains, who provide goods and/or services, as well as any outside personnel, vendors, or business entity working on site at KHSC.

**COVID-19:** an acute respiratory illness in humans caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus that is capable of producing severe symptoms and death in some cases, especially in older people and those with underlying medical conditions. Asymptomatic infection with subsequent transmission can occur. It is primarily transmitted person-to-person through respiratory droplets and short-range aerosols. It was originally identified in 2019 and became pandemic in 2020.

**COVID-19 Outbreak:** defined as two or more nosocomial-acquired, COVID-19 cases occurring within 48 hours on a specific unit. The declaration of the outbreak will be made by the KHSC Infection Prevention & Control Service in consultation with KFL&A Public Health.

**COVID-19 Primary Vaccine series:** means you have received:

- a) the COVID-19 vaccine series authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines (two doses of Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, Novavax, Medicago, AstraZeneca, including COVISHIELD) in any combination or one dose of Janssen (Johnson & Johnson); or
- b) a full or partial primary series of a non-Health Canada authorized vaccine plus any additional recommended doses of a Health Canada authorized COVID-19 vaccine to complete the primary series; and
- c) your final dose of the COVID-19 primary vaccine series at least 14 days ago.

For details on acceptable vaccines and number of doses required for those vaccinated outside of Ontario/Canada, see [COVID-19 Guidance for Individuals Vaccinated outside of Ontario/Canada](#) (March 24, 2022).

**KHSC Site:** includes the two hospitals as well as all other sites, buildings, and affiliated sites that are owned, leased, or occupied by KHSC staff, and includes KHSC patient/client homes where staff are providing care, and KHSC owned and leased vehicles.

**Medical Contraindication:** a valid medical reason preventing COVID-19 vaccination on a temporary or permanent basis but excludes those who have a personal preference not to be vaccinated. Medical contraindications to COVID-19 vaccination are rare.

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**Rapid Antigen Test (RAT):** is a rapid, qualitative detection test for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus. A nasal or nasopharyngeal swab is collected from individuals and test results are typically available within 10-15 minutes.

**Staff:** includes all employees (including those that are full-time, part-time, casual, and temporary) and physicians and credentialed staff (e.g., dentist, midwife, extended nursing class, departmental/research assistant, clinical observer).

**Vaccination:** The act of introducing a **vaccine** into the body to produce immunity to a specific disease. Vaccination is a simple, safe, and effective way of protecting people against harmful infections & diseases before they come into contact with them. It uses your body's natural defenses to build resistance to specific infections.

**Variant:** a viral genome (genetic code) that may contain one or more mutations.

### Procedures

#### **Existing Staff**

1. All existing employees, physicians, and credentialed staff, including those returning to work from a leave, must provide proof of the required COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment, unless there exists a verified medical contraindication or an exemption based on a protected ground under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
  - a) Where vaccination is medically contraindicated, provide supporting documentation from your treating physician, or registered nurse in the extended class, that sets out the documented medical reason for the contraindication and the effective time period for the medical reason (i.e., permanent, or time-limited). Proof of medical exemption must be submitted to Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness (OHSW) in person or email to: [KHSCoccupationalhealthsafety@kingstonhsc.ca](mailto:KHSCoccupationalhealthsafety@kingstonhsc.ca).

**OR**

- b) Where vaccination is prohibited based on a protected ground under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, provide proof, acceptable to KHSC, your vaccine refusal is based on a protected ground. For employees and volunteers, submit proof to the Vice President and CHRO, and for physicians and credentialed staff submit to the Chief, Medical & Academic Affairs.

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2. If an individual has received their COVID-19 vaccine in Ontario, the only acceptable proof of vaccination is the receipt provided by the Ministry of Health via COVax. For those who have been vaccinated outside of Ontario/Canada, the individual should contact the local Public Health Unit to have their vaccines entered into COVax and proof of vaccination must align to the requirements set by the province of Ontario. Proof shall include your name, date of birth, date of vaccination, vaccine name, lot number, and name of the health care practitioner administering the vaccine.
  - For more information on available vaccines, please see the government's webpage [Approved COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
  - An individual who received their vaccination in Ontario can download their COVID-19 vaccine receipt here: <https://covid19.ontariohealth.ca/>

### **New Hires and New Appointments**

1. Newly hired and appointment staff must provide proof of the required COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment or appointment unless there exists a verified medical contraindication or exemption based on a protected ground under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
2. KHSC reserves the right to rescind an individual's offer of employment or appointment should that individual fail to comply with mandatory COVID-19 vaccination. The individual shall not have any claim, past or future, complaint, or cause of action against KHSC as a result of this rescission.
3. Documentation of vaccination for new hires and new appointments shall be provided as follows:
  - a. New employees shall provide proof of vaccination to KHSC's Occupational Health Department as part of their pre-placement and prior to their employment start date.
  - b. New volunteers shall provide their proof of vaccination to Volunteer Services.
  - c. New Board Members shall provide proof of vaccination to the Board office.
  - d. New Patient Advisors shall provide proof of vaccination to the PFCC Lead's Office.
  - e. New credentialed staff (e.g., physicians, dentists, midwives, extended nursing class, departmental/research assistants, clinical observers) shall provide proof of vaccination to the Medical Affairs office as a condition of appointment.
  - f. New research staff, who are not hired as KHSC employees and not credentialed through Medical Affairs, will provide their proof of vaccination to the office of the Vice President, Research.

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### Volunteers

1. All Volunteers must provide proof of the required COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of volunteering at a KHSC site unless there exists a verified medical contraindication or exemption based on a protected ground under the *Human Rights Code*.
2. Volunteers are to provide their proof of vaccination to the Volunteer Services Department.
3. Board Members are to provide proof of vaccination to the Board Office.
4. Patient Advisors are to provide proof of vaccination to the PFCC Lead's Office.

### Students/Learners

1. All students and learners must meet the COVID-19 vaccination requirements in order to enter a KHSC site unless there exists a medical contraindication or exemption based on a protected ground under the *Human Rights Code*.
2. Learners are to provide their proof of vaccination to their educational institution. The educational institution must provide KHSC with written attestation that their students/learners meet the vaccination requirements and submit this attestation to their contact person at KHSC via Media Affairs or the Professional Practice Office.
3. Where a medical contraindication or exemption exists, as verified by the educational institution, an unvaccinated learner will be managed by their educational institution in accordance with their own policy, which must meet the minimum requirements of KHSC's policy and any relevant legislation.
4. KHSC reserves the right to request proof of compliance with this policy, including but not limited to, proof of vaccination or exemption, at any time.

### Contractors

1. KHSC requires all contractors, including service providers and vendors, to meet KHSC's mandatory COVID-19 vaccination requirements, in addition to other vaccine requirements needed to work at hospitals as per the *Public Hospitals Act* (see [Administrative Policy #02-210 Communicable Disease Screening for KHSC Staff & Affiliates](#)) where they meet the following criteria:
  - they are working in a patient care area of a KHSC site; OR
  - they are working in a non-patient care area regularly for greater than 30 days, or occasionally but on a repeated basis.
2. It is the responsibility of KHSC host/contact person/MRP coordinating the work/on site visit, to verify the individual(s) meets the vaccination requirements prior to them being issued a KHSC ID Badge and/or working on a KHSC.
3. Contracted personnel who regularly work on site (e.g., Mohawk Medbuy, Compass, Morrison's, Lovell Pharmacy, etc.) must meet vaccination requirements and it is the responsibility of the service provider employer to confirm their staff meet such requirements.

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4. For contracts established by Mohawk Medbuy under the Director of Procurement and Innovation, language outlining the requirements related to vaccination will be included in all contracts/purchased service agreements.
5. For purchased service agreements established by the KHSC Contracts Office and People Services, language outlining the requirements related to vaccination will be included in all contracts/purchased service agreements.
6. For personnel supplied through staffing agencies (e.g., Manpower, Bayshore, Adecco) the KHSC Primary Contact for the agency contract/arrangement will inform the staffing agency of the vaccine requirements. The agency supplying the personnel will be required to provide confirmation that each worker meets the vaccination requirements.
7. Vendors must confirm they meet the required vaccination requirements through their submission of an annual attestation via the Vendor Credentialing Standard (Health Standards Organization (HSO)/Accreditation Canada (AC)).
8. Where a verified medical contraindication or exemption exists for the staff of a contractor or service provider, that is verified by the contractor or service provider, the staff will be managed by their employer (i.e., the contractor or service provider) in accordance with their policy, which must meet the minimum requirements of KHSC's policy and any relevant legislation.
9. Any contractor or service provide failing to comply will be barred from entry on a temporary or permanent basis.
10. KHSC reserves the right to request proof of vaccination.

**Note** - EMS, Firefighters and Police Officers will be permitted to enter without delay and without question in the course of carrying out their duties. They will continue to be guided by their own workplace policies, including adherence to any required screening, testing, vaccinations, and use of personal protective equipment.

### **Restrictions**

1. Those who have approved medical or Human Rights exemptions to COVID-19 vaccination, may be subject to restrictions that do not apply to vaccinated personnel. Such restrictions can include, but are not limited to, requiring additional personal protective equipment (PPE), requiring rapid antigen testing, reassignment during a COVID-19 outbreak, etc.

### **Staff Compliance & Reporting**

1. Vaccination status for the COVID-19 primary vaccine series will be recorded and tracked by Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness (OHSW) for employees, and by Medical Affairs for credentialed staff (e.g., physicians, dentists, midwives, extended nursing class, departmental/research assistants, clinical observers). Vaccination status will be

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shared, as needed, for the sole purpose of ensuring compliance with this policy and for outbreak and workforce management.

2. Employees are encouraged to submit updated COVID-19 vaccinations they receive to OHSW, however this is not mandatory.
3. For medical residents who have rotations in other organizations, confirmation of vaccinations status will be provided by OHSW to the Chief, Medical & Academic Affairs.
4. Where proof of vaccination or medical exemption is not submitted to OHSW, or exemption under the Human Rights Code is not submitted and approved by the Vice President and CHRO, or the Chief, Medical & Academic Affairs, it will be assumed the staff member is unvaccinated.
5. Failure by staff to adhere to any components of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Failure by physicians or credentialed staff to adhere to any components of this policy may result in suspension/revocation of privileges.
6. Where KHSC is required to report statistical information on COVID-19 vaccination, only aggregate, non-identifying information will be shared.

### References

Health Canada. (Updated Jan. 10, 2024). [Approved COVID-19 Vaccines](#).

Ministry of Health (March 24, 2022). [COVID-19 Guidance for Individuals Vaccinated outside of Ontario/Canada](#).

Ministry of Health (December 22, 2023). [COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance](#).

Public Health Agency of Canada. [COVID-19 vaccines: Canadian Immunization Guide](#)

Public Health Agency of Canada (October 27, 2023). [An Advisory Committee Statement \(ACS\) on Immunization \(NACI\): Guidance on an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccines in the spring for individuals at high risk of severe illness due to COVID-19](#).

Authorizing Signature:

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Dr. David Pichora  
President and Chief Executive Officer