

# HALDIMAND COUNTY PARAMEDIC SERVICE – COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

Original Date: September 7, 2021

Revised: November 16, 2021

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

Employers across Canada have a legal obligation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to provide their employees with safe workplaces and to take all reasonable precautions to protect employees from contracting a work-related illness. The vaccines available in Canada are currently thought to be between 80% and 95% effective in either preventing infection, or preventing symptoms of COVID-19 in the vaccinated person.

All existing staff, student placements, and volunteers are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, unless it is medically contraindicated. All hires into new postings will be required to meet the job requirements as posted, which will include full COVID-19 vaccination.

The impacts of non-vaccination that were considered in the development of this policy can be categorized into three areas. 1. Patients/General Public 2. Staff 3. Costs to Employer/Public.

- Patients/General Public: Health and Safety Risk to patients including the vulnerable sector. Paramedic services are responding to vulnerable patients as they are transported for continued care, it is understood that these patients are at increased risk for contracting the COVID-19 virus and experiencing serious outcomes. It is also understood that some patients may be carrying the COVID-19 virus and a risk to paramedic employees.
- Staff: Health and Safety Risks to Staff (vaccinated and unvaccinated) and their families should they contract the virus and transmit it throughout the workplace, or to their families and the community. Should an outbreak occur it risks the safety of Emergency Services as staffing levels may be impacted.
- Costs to Employer/Public: In the event of an outbreak the employer will have additional costs for overtime to adequately staff Ambulances and for PPE required.

## 2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Protection of our vulnerable residents and patients is of paramount importance and the participation in COVID-19 vaccination is required for existing staff as of November 17, 2021, and will be required for any new hires into Paramedic Services. High rates of vaccinations in the service is important to protect all people who may come in contact with Paramedics, as health care providers and active members of the community. Haldimand County Paramedic Services will provide the following supports for people subject to this policy to receive a vaccine: paid time, if required to receive the vaccine; assistance with booking vaccine appointment; and, peer-to-peer support.

Non-compliance with the policy will be managed as outlined herein and in accordance with Council approved policies, human resources policies, collective agreements and applicable legislation, and directives.

**Statistical Information;** All licensees must collect, maintain, and disclose to the Ministry of Health, key data metrics that underpin the Directive. No identifying / personal information will be provided to the Ministry in relation to this policy; all statistical information will be provided in aggregate form.

## 3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all Haldimand County Paramedic Services employees and volunteers, including students as well as agency providers working at Paramedic Services locations.

### 3.01 Existing Staff

From July 1, 2021 until September 26, 2021 - existing staff have three options as suggested by the Ministry of Health:

1. Show proof of full immunization against COVID-19
2. Provide medical documentation showing unable to receive any COVID-19 vaccine
3. Review education material about COVID-19 Via MedicLearn and complete attestation form
  - If still not willing to vaccinate, staff will be required to sign a Declination Form (Appendix 1) that outlines the risks of not being vaccinated to themselves, the patients and their coworkers – as well as an accountability statement indicating they are aware of the impacts or consequences that could arise if they contract and transmit the virus within the work place.

Those that are not immunized, including those with medical reasons (so, those that are in categories 2 and 3 above), will be required to complete regular COVID-19 testing as directed in Provincial guidance.

For clarity, the three options are described in more detail as follows:

- a. **Providing proof of vaccination** For people who are vaccinated in Ontario, the only acceptable proof of vaccination is the receipt provided by the Ministry of Health to the person who was vaccinated. This includes either the physical/hard copy receipt or email version of the receipt a person would have received from Public Health Ontario.
- b. **Proof of a medical reason for not being vaccinated** Proof must be provided by either a physician or a nurse practitioner (note: A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse who holds an extended certificate of registration under the Nursing Act, 1991). In some instances, the medical reason for the person not being vaccinated may be time-limited. As we would with any other type of medical accommodation, we will need to follow up periodically to ensure that nothing has changed from the physician's/nurse practitioner's point of view on vaccination for that staff member, by requiring updated medical documentation. Should the medical circumstances change, allowing the employee to be vaccinated, documentation as per 3.01a will be required.
- c. **The educational course is not considered "mandatory"**, since there is an option of a or b above. Staff who choose c will be required to complete the course via MedicLearn. The educational program has been approved by Paramedic Services / Haldimand County and addresses all of the following learning components: • how COVID-19 vaccines work; • vaccine safety related to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines; • benefits of vaccination against COVID-19; • risks of not being vaccinated against COVID-19; and • possible side effects of COVID-19 vaccination. The Ministry of Health requires that proof of completion be provided.

The Ministry of Health has announced that employers may develop their own policies related to COVID-19 vaccination. Effective September 27, 2021 this policy is amended to require the following:

*Item 3.01 above, in its entirety, is redundant and shall be replaced as follows:*

**3.01 (Effective September 27, 2021)** All staff, students and volunteers of Haldimand County Paramedic Services will be required to be fully vaccinated as of November 17, 2021, unless providing the necessary documentation for a valid medical exemption by that date. For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

**“Fully vaccinated”:** An individual is considered fully vaccinated if they have received:

- The full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines, or
- One or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or
- Three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada;
- Final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine was received at least 14 days before providing the proof of being fully vaccinated.

*Note: This definition may be amended to require future doses/boosters of the COVID-19 vaccine approved by Health Canada, if deemed necessary.*

Unvaccinated staff with medical exemptions will be required to receive routine COVID-19 testing as per the direction of the Emergency Services Chief or designate, taking into consideration Ministry of Health Directives and best practices.

### **3.02 New Hires**

COVID-19 full vaccination for all Haldimand County Paramedic Services, including students, is a job requirement unless a valid medical exemption is provided. Medical exemptions will be managed by Human Resources and routine documentation will be required, as requested, on an ongoing basis.

***Item 3.03 becomes redundant as of September 27, 2021 as per the approved policy amendments.***

### **3.03 Existing Staff Posting into another Line/Shift, Job Status or Classification**

Internal and external job postings – Job documents will show COVID-19 vaccination as a job requirement. Any existing Paramedics applying to a new line or shift, a new status (i.e. part time to full time) or a new classification, must meet the job requirements in the posting. The only exception would be those with medical exemption ( with documentation as per 3.01b.)

## **4.0 PROCEDURE**

- a) Employees will be given every reasonable opportunity to be informed of the risks, benefits and side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - Education on the benefits, potential risks and side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine;
  - Posting of a notice in accessible locations, e.g. Staff Lounge and bulletin boards of COVID-19 information;
  - Sending reminders to those Employees who have not yet received immunization prior to November 17, 2021;

- b) The Emergency Services Chief or designate will collect the required information and documentation related to staff vaccination and report data as necessary to Human Resources and to the Ministry Of Health.
- c) Unvaccinated staff will complete a declination form (Appendix 1) This declination form will be kept on the employee file. (*redundant as of September 27, 2021*)
- d) Staff who do not produce proof of being fully vaccinated for COVID-19 by November 17, 2021 will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence effective November 18, 2021 for failure to comply with the policy.
- e) Staff members can continue to work within the service with increased rapid testing if they meet **all of the following requirements:**
- Began working or attending the workplace on or prior to October 1, 2021
  - Have provided proof of at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by November 17, 2021
  - Must provide proof of final required dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, as required by Section D, before December 13, 2021.
- f) Unvaccinated, medically contraindicated staff or staff members covered under 4.0(e) shall work directly with the Emergency Services Chief or designate to ensure accountability. Full time staff will be required to undergo RAPID ANTIGEN test at the start of every shift block – i.e. Monday, Friday and Wednesday at the start of each block. Part time staff will require RAPID ANTIGEN testing at the start or every other shift, when scheduled consecutive dates or every shift if greater than a 72 hour span between shifts. Testing requirements (frequency and method) may change and direction will be provided by the Emergency Services Chief or designate.
- g) Unvaccinated staff will be required to wear PPE as directed by the service at all times, including after precautions have been lifted for vaccinated staff.
- h) Refer to **OP-55 Antigen Screening Testing** for testing process steps.
- i) A Rapid Antigen Results form will be completed, dated and witnessed following the above pattern. (Appendix 2) Forms will be kept on file following Ministry requirements for reporting.
- j) Should the Rapid Antigen test result in a positive test, self isolation and social distancing guidelines will be followed while the on call Deputy Chief is notified.
- k) Hamilton CACC will be notified and crew will be noted as first response until full complement is available.
- l) Local Public Health guidelines will be followed for isolation and testing to return to work.