

 <p>Hospice Care Ottawa <i>When comfort matters most</i></p> <p><i>Policy & Procedure:</i></p>	VACCINATION POLICY #2C- 04		
<i>Performed by:</i>	Senior Leadership Team		
<i>Approved by:</i>	Executive Directo		
<i>Date Approved:</i>	Nov 7, 2018	<i>Date Revised:</i>	May 20, 2021
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PURPOSE:

The occurrence of communicable diseases within the community is unpredictable and random in nature, so Hospice Care Ottawa holds themselves to the highest standards of preventive health measures. This policy outlines vaccination requirements for seasonal viruses in order to create a healthy work place environment for all Staff, Volunteers and Clients of Hospice Care Ottawa.

BACKGROUND

Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of infectious diseases, whether it is the seasonal flu (influenza) or childhood infections. Safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19 are becoming available to protect us against COVID-19.

Influenza

Influenza (the flu) can be a serious illness that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Anyone can get sick from the flu. People with flu can spread it to others. Influenza viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are up to about 6 feet away or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. A person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

COVID-19

COVID 19 is a viral infection that primarily affects the lungs. Some people may have a mild illness. Others may get very sick, including older adults or those with a pre-existing health condition. Very rarely, some children can get a serious inflammatory condition. The long-term effects of COVID-19 are not fully known. Some people are at greater risk of complications if they get COVID-19.

ARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, spreads from an infected person to others through respiratory droplets and aerosols created when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, shouts, eats or talks. The droplets vary in size from large droplets that fall to the ground rapidly (within

seconds or minutes) near the infected person, to smaller droplets, sometimes called aerosols, which linger in the air under some circumstances.

Vaccines

Vaccines for COVID-19 and influenza are separate products. COVID-19 vaccine will not protect you against influenza and vice versa. Vaccines contain weakened or inactive parts of a particular organism (antigen) that triggers an immune response within the body. Newer vaccines contain the blueprint for producing antigens rather than the antigen itself. Regardless of whether the vaccine is made up of the antigen itself or the blueprint so that the body will produce the antigen, this weakened version will not cause the disease in the person receiving the vaccine, but it will prompt their immune system to respond much as it would have on its first reaction to the actual pathogen.

The seasonal influenza vaccine changes every flu season. When you receive your annual flu vaccine, you are protected only from the specific influenza strains that are circulating for that given season that are covered by the vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccination is an effective way to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of this new virus. Only vaccines that Health Canada determines to be safe and effective will be approved for use in Canada and available in Ontario. The vaccines will protect those who receive it from getting sick, but it is possible that someone who has been vaccinated could still carry the virus and pass the virus on to others, although it would likely be at a much lower rate. Public health measures such as mask wearing, physical distancing and hand washing are still required after being vaccinated.

POLICY:

Hospice Care Ottawa requests **that all staff and volunteers be vaccinated annually against Influenza and as available against other communicable diseases such as COVID-19.** HCO commits to making vaccines as accessible as possible. In the event of a pandemic please refer to the COVID Outbreak Management Plan.

Two types of exemptions are acceptable:

- **Medical exemptions**
Some people may be at risk for an adverse reaction because of an allergy to one of the vaccine components or a medical condition. This is referred to as a medical exemption. A medical note is required.
- **Religious exemptions**
Some people may decline vaccination because of a religious belief. This is referred to as a religious exemption. A written explanation is required.

Staff and volunteers **who do not receive the appropriate vaccine due to a medical or religious exemption may continue to work but will be required to wear full PPE¹ at all times** in

¹ Full PPE requirement will be defined at the time by HCO Medical Director

Residence during the seasonal influenza season, during a communicable disease “outbreak” or during a pandemic, as declared Public Health.

Staff and volunteers **who refuse to receive the appropriate vaccine for reasons other than a medical or religious exemption will not be able to work** and will not be paid, **during seasonal influenza season**, during a communicable disease “outbreak” or during a pandemic, as declared Public Health.

For paid staff who cannot obtain their vaccination outside of their scheduled work hours, and need to go off site for the vaccine, they will be paid one hour’ of time to leave the work place for this vaccination. This requires advance approval from their supervisor who must ensure adequate staff coverage in their absence.

PROCEDURE:

1. Following vaccination, proof must be provided to the HR Coordinator (staff) and/or Coordinator of Volunteers (volunteers)
2. Staff and volunteers who do not receive vaccination must provide written medical or religious exemption evidence to their supervisor.
3. All new employees will be required to show proof of vaccination.
4. Senior Management will provide all staff and volunteers with the dates and times of Immunization Clinics being offered either at the Hospice well as a list of available clinics throughout the City of Ottawa. Vaccination may also be obtained from individual medical care provider or pharmacist.