

 <p>Hospice Care Ottawa <i>When comfort matters most</i></p> <p><i>Policy & Procedure:</i></p>	COVID – 19 VACCINATION POLICY #2C- 04		
<i>Performed by:</i>	Senior Leadership Team		
<i>Approved by:</i>	Executive Director		
<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 prevention of COVID-19 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. Safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19 are available to protect us against COVID-19.

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 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.

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.

Routine Practices for Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC)

Routine Practices refer to infection prevention and control (IPAC) practices to be used with all clients/patients/residents during all care, to prevent and control transmission of microorganisms in all health care settings. Routine Practices are incorporated into the culture of HCO and into the daily practice of each health care provider to protect both the client/patient/resident and health care provider. Vaccination along with routine practices provides the most effective method to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Routine Practices at HCO include:

- risk assessment of the client/patient/resident and the health care provider's interaction with the client/patient/resident;
- hand hygiene to be performed with an alcohol-based hand rub or with soap and water before and after contact with a client/patient/resident or their environment, before invasive/aseptic procedures and after body fluid exposure risk;
- Control of the environment, including:
 - appropriate placement and bed spacing, such as single rooms
 - cleaning of equipment that is used for/on more than one client/patient/resident between uses
- engineering controls, such as:
 - well-maintained heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems with sufficient air changes per hour
 - barriers, such as the use of Plexiglass® screens or curtains
 - point-of-care sharps containers and alcohol-based hand rub dispensers
 - adequate dedicated hand wash sinks

During the COVID-19 pandemic, additional infection control practices are in place at HCO including:

- Wearing of medical grade masks (covering mouth and nose) and eye protection at all times when working in client areas of HCO.
- Wearing of gloves when providing patient care.

- Donning and doffing additional PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) such as gowns and N95 respirators when required, for particular client circumstances such as those on contact/droplet precautions or using AGMP (Aerosol generating medical procedures).

Please refer to Ontario Public Health for details: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/b/2012/bp-rpap-healthcare-settings.pdf?sc_lang=en

POLICY:

Hospice Care Ottawa expects all staff, volunteers and visitors be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.¹

Two types of exemptions are acceptable pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights Code:

- **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 or Ethical exemptions**
Some people may decline vaccination because of a religious or ethical belief. A written explanation is required.

Staff, volunteers and visitors who are not fully vaccinated due to a medical or religious/ethical exemption, may continue to work with HCO if they provide proof of negative COVID-19 PCR test on a weekly basis. Those who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 for reasons other than a medical or religious/ethical exemption and do not provide evidence of weekly COVID negative PCR test, will not be allowed to work with Hospice Care Ottawa.

New staff are required to show vaccination status at time of hiring and will be subject to the policy regarding exemptions and weekly testing.

Note: Routine precautions are required at all times for those providing patient care, whether vaccinated or not. Further precautions such as contact and droplet precautions² may be required at the discretion of the Medical Director and Executive Director. HCO commits to making necessary PPE available to all staff and volunteers.

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

¹ Fully vaccinated at the time of this policy means that staff/volunteer/visitors have received two doses of available COVID 19 vaccine and it has been 14 days since the second dose.

² https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/b/2012/bp-rpap-healthcare-settings.pdf?sc_lang=en

this vaccination. This requires advance approval from their supervisor who must ensure adequate staff coverage in their absence.

PROCEDURE:

1. Following full vaccination, proof must be provided to the HR Coordinator (staff) and/or Coordinator of Volunteers (volunteers)
2. Staff and volunteers who do not receive full vaccination must provide written medical or religious/ethical/moral exemption evidence to their supervisor.
3. Those exempted from COVID 19 vaccination provide proof of negative COVID PCR test to supervisor weekly.
4. All new employees will be required to show proof of vaccination upon hiring or willingness to provide proof of negative COVID test within one week of start date.
5. Senior Leadership will provide all staff and volunteers with the dates and times of Immunization Clinics being offered either at the Hospice well as information on available clinics throughout the City of Ottawa. Vaccination may also be obtained from an individual's medical care provider or pharmacist.
6. Senior Leadership will communicate with all staff, volunteers and visitors on a regular basis information and requirements on infection control and precautions.