

Diocese of Ontario

COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

Effective September 24th, 2021

Intent

The Diocese has a duty to ensure a safe workplace and to ensure that our spaces are safe for members of our community.

COVID-19 is a highly infectious viral disease which can be transmitted through respiratory droplets and touching mucous membranes after contact with a surface with virus on it. Consequences from being infected with COVID-19 can range from mild to severe, including death.

Achieving high immunization rates is a critical part of a range of measures and actions that can help prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 to those most vulnerable in our society. Vaccination against COVID-19 helps reduce the number of new cases and severe outcomes, including hospitalizations and death due to COVID-19.

Accordingly, the Diocese of Ontario has enacted this policy to increase the protection and safety of our parishioners, clergy, employees, and all of those we serve by reducing the transmission of COVID-19 in our church and office buildings and other ministry spaces. This policy will comply with all applicable laws and is based on guidance from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health, and local health authorities, as applicable.

Applicability

Those functioning in ministry roles have been entrusted with responsibilities which include protection of the vulnerable. This policy thus applies to the following people:

- all clergy holding a Bishop's licence or permission.
- all licensed lay workers.
- all diocesan staff.
- all liturgical leaders including, but not limited to:
 - musicians, including vocalists;
 - readers, intercessors, servers, and communion assistants;
 - greeters, ushers, and sidespeople;
- wardens;
- all people ministering with children, youth, and young adults; and

- all people ministering with marginalized or vulnerable populations, including food security and other outreach ministries.

This policy does not apply to those under the age of 12 and those who have a Medical Exemption (as defined in the Provincial Policy. Those who are under the age of 12 are required to take additional infection and prevention control measures, including providing proof of a negative COVID-19 test (with that result having been obtained no more than 48 hours old prior to entry in the Workplace).

People in the roles set out above will be required to be fully immunized with a COVID-19 vaccine approved by Health Canada, unless a legal exemption has been granted, to serve in the Diocese of Ontario during this pandemic. To continue serving in these roles, persons designated above must have received their first dose of vaccine by September 30, 2021, and a compatible second dose (if an approved multiple-dose vaccine combination, whether the same or different from the first dose) no later than October 31, 2021. Vaccination status must also be kept current by obtaining booster doses as recommended by public health authorities. Additional information will be provided when known.

These protocols require proof of vaccination be shown on entry to church property, except for those entering for:

- worship services. Note: Subject to the other restrictions (eg 25 masked, seated, distanced people maximum with service of refreshments to a table), we have received guidance that Coffee Hour after church does not require checking of Proof of Vaccination as long as it immediately follows the service.
- Social Services (such as AA), Medical Services or other community service ministries

Records are not to be kept; the proof must be shown each time someone enters. Note: Tenants who rent church property are required to enforce these policies for their visitors.

As we welcome all in the name of Christ, worshippers are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated out of care for the vulnerable among us, although this will not be required at this time. As Christians, and through our baptismal covenant, we promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, love our neighbour, and respect the dignity of every human being. We have a moral obligation to protect others and to set an example to the communities we serve. There is one crucial way we can love our neighbours, and that is to vaccinate ourselves against COVID-19 if we are able to do so. For those who are not vaccinated (by medical exemption or by choice), it is recommended that they join worship, fellowship, formation activities and governance meetings remotely to protect themselves and the rest of the community.

Policy Requirements

For clergy & diocesan staff

Proof of vaccination must be submitted via email to the diocesan Pandemic email (Pandemic@ontario.anglican.ca) Alternatively, arrangements can be made to share a copy of the vaccine confirmation via a Teams Meeting by video. Confirmation information (name and date of second /full vaccination) will be maintained, protected and stored securely by the Diocesan Executive Office and destroyed when no longer needed. This will not become part of an individual's permanent clergy or employment file. Supervisors, coworkers, and other parties shall not have access to the vaccine confirmation information or the details of the same, except to the extent necessary to implement this policy or as may be required by law.

For those who have a Medical Exemption, they will be required to obtain and confirm negative COVID Tests twice weekly.

For parish or regional ministry ministers

Each parish or regional ministry will maintain a record of the lay persons in these roles with an indication that they have provided proof of vaccination. A trusted person is to be assigned to visually check each person's vaccination confirmation and record the name of each person and the date of their second vaccination. Confirmation information will be stored securely and destroyed when no longer needed..

Individuals providing proof of vaccination are presumed, by the act of providing the proof, to be consenting to the diocese having this information.

Wardens and Incumbent/Priest In Charge are responsible to ensure that the requirements of this policy are met in their church or churches. All rental groups are required to follow this policy and represent to parishes that they are in compliance. It is necessary that the church inquire into the vaccination policy of the groups using the facilities. Where the policy of an outside organization does not meet the standards outlined in this policy, a discussion should take place between the churchwardens and the user organization to determine an appropriate course of action. If the renter is unable or unwilling to follow this policy the church must consider terminating or at least suspending the relationship for safety reasons.

Exemptions Under the *Human Rights Code*

Anyone, to whom this policy applies, be they clergy, lay worker, staff, parish, or regional minister, who qualifies for a valid legal exemption from vaccination under the Human Rights Code (the "Code") shall provide reasonable proof of the same. For example, those medically unable to be vaccinated must obtain a written doctor's note exempting them from this vaccination requirement and submit it to the Executive Officer.

Those with a satisfactory exemption will be required to take additional safety measures, including regularly providing proof of a negative COVID-19 test prior to in-person activities, at a frequency determined appropriate given the role they fulfill.

All persons requiring accommodation under the Code, whether it be in vaccination or testing, shall be provided with such accommodation up to the point of undue hardship. The Executive Officer or his delegate will engage with a person entitled to an exemption for Code related grounds under this section in a co-operative process to determine if reasonable accommodation is possible, including alternative ways a person might continue to safely work or minister. This will consist of an individual assessment based on the specific facts regarding the employee or volunteer's duties, the parish's or diocese's needs and the duty to accommodate. While there will always be an effort to provide reasonable and dignified accommodation, there may be situations where an individual cannot be accommodated short of undue hardship.

For those that may seek an exemption from vaccination for religious factors, there is neither legal nor doctrinal authority within the Anglican Church of Canada for any of its ministers to issue a religious vaccination exemption.

No Harassment

The Diocese will not tolerate harassment on the basis of, or related to, vaccination status. All individuals are entitled to work in a manner that supports their dignity and affords them

respect. Anyone who engages in harassment will be subject to consequences. For clergy and staff, this may include discipline up to and including dismissal or termination of appointment. For others, this may include suspension and/or termination of their role with the diocese.

Non-Compliance

Officeholders and employees who do not provide the required proof of vaccination – or evidence of valid Code based exemption or who fail/refuse to comply with testing requirement (or other measures implemented to address the risk of COVID-19) may be subject to disciplinary action, be restricted from attending certain locations/premises and/or be restricted from performing their duties. Those holding a designated position on a volunteer basis may be required to refrain from the exercise of their ministry.

Additional Measures

All directives of the Government of Ontario and local public health authorities must be always adhered to, including the following foundational pandemic guidance: minimizing the number of persons in a place at the same time, maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres, using well-constructed, well-fitting masks, practising good hand and respiratory hygiene, and staying home if feeling ill.

Amendments

This policy is developed in accordance with current medical and scientific recommendations in an ever-changing landscape. Recommendations from public health authorities can change as new information is received. The diocese will endeavor to remain current as more information and best practices become known, the policy may be amended by the Bishop of Ontario from time to time. Any changes will be communicated to those to whom this policy applies and those individuals are then required to comply with the amendments, including any updated measures.

For more information, please contact Pandemic@ontario.anglican.ca