

Vaccination Policy [Best Practice] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

Purpose

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines and procedures for Merri-bek Early Years Management:

- To continue to provide a safe work environment for staff and children, and contribute to the safety of the community we work in. In our workplace, our Employee/Employee/Worker interact and have close contact with people who are adversely affected by the health impacts of COVID-19 (specifically children under five years of age, many of whom are not eligible to be vaccinated against COVID-19).¹
- To continue to work towards encouraging all new employees and some existing Employee/Employee/Worker, volunteers, children, and the community to be vaccinated against Influenza and COVID-19.

Policy Statement

This policy sets out the MEYMs position on COVID-19 vaccinations in MEYMs early childhood education and care centres and kindergartens.

The purpose of this policy is to acknowledge individual Employee/Employee/Worker rights to be vaccinated or not and acknowledge that viruses such as COVID-19 and Influenza are circulating within the community. This policy also provides clear communication to MEYM Employee/Employee/Worker that the health safety and wellbeing of all employees, children and families are of utmost importance and the organisation will strongly encourage vaccinations against highly transfereable illnesses such as COVID-19 and Influenza. However, it is not mandatory within the MEYM workplace.

Scope

This policy sets out the MEYMs position on COVID-19 vaccinations in early childhood education and care centres and kindergartens. The purpose of this policy is to strongly encourage and support all MEYM employees to be vaccinated against Influenza and COVID-19 in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our workplace and our community. However vaccinations are not mandatory.

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, the nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, Board of Management members, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs, activities and services of MEYM, including during offsite excursions and activities.

Background

Vaccines have been proven to protect against severe disease from COVID-19 both directly (by direct protection) and indirectly (by prevention of transmission). While protection against infection wanes after the

¹ Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). 25 March 2022. Response to ATAGI advice about vaccinating 5 to 11-year-olds against COVID-19. Accessed at: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-recommendations-on-pfizer-covid-19-vaccine-use-in-children-aged-5-to-11-years>

Vaccination Policy [Best Practice] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

first booster dose, protection against severe disease (rather than all infection) is relatively well maintained, especially in healthy populations.²

Viruses are common in the community and in Early Childhood Settings and can often lead to illness particularly in Employee/Employee/Worker and children. A person with a virus may or may not show signs of illness and, in many instances, the infectious phase of the illness may be in the period before symptoms become apparent, or during the recovery phase. While it is not possible to prevent all infections in education and care environments, services can prevent or control the spread of many infectious diseases by adopting simple hygiene practices and being vaccinated also assists in controlling the spread of the illness.

With the recent COVID-19 pandemic there were considerable changes to Health and Hygiene practices including rigorous handwashing regimes and social distancing measures put in place to try and reduce the spread of COVID-19 and Influenza. These measures will remain in place into the future.

Legislation and Standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 77, 106, 109, 112, 168*
- *Food Act 1990*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety, Standard 2.1: Each child's health is promoted*
 - *Element 2.1.3: Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented*
 - *Element 2.1.4: Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>
- DHHS

Policy Details

The Approved Provider or Persons with Management and Control is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all Employees /Worker are provided with a copy of this policy and have a clear understanding of the procedures and practices outlined within;

²Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). 25 March 2022. ATAGI statement on recommendations on a winter booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Accessed at: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-statement-on-recommendations-on-a-winter-booster-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine>

Vaccination Policy [Best Practice] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

- Complying with privacy obligations and in particular, will not disclose any information about an individual's personal, vaccination or health status
- Ensuring the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff and volunteers at the service implement adequate health and hygiene practices in line with COVID Safe Plans.
- Providing Employee/Worker with further information about the COVID-19 vaccine requirements when requested;
- Establishing robust induction procedures that include the provision of information regarding the benefits of being vaccinated against COVID-19 and Influenza for prospective new Employee/Worker if required.
- The recruitment process includes a statement that indicates that fully vaccinated candidates are preferred but not mandatory.

The Nominated Supervisor or Person in Day-to-Day Charge is responsible for:

- Implementing and ensuring that all staff members and volunteers at the service follow adequate health and hygiene practices, and safe practices for preparing to reduce the spread of contagious diseases such as COVID-19 and influenza.
- Actively encouraging educators and staff who have, or are suspected of having an infectious disease to not attend the service in order to prevent the spread of infection to others attending the service and test for COVID-19 through a PCR or RAT.

Educators and other staff are responsible for:

- Actively encouraging parents/guardians to keep children who are unwell at home to prevent the spread of infection to other children and educators;
- Being conscious of their responsibility to not attend the service when they have or suspect they have an infectious disease.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Keeping their child/ren home if they are unwell or have an infectious disease that requires their exclusion from the education and care service;
- Informing the service if their child has an infectious disease;

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

Requirements for new Employee/Employee/Worker

As a condition of accepting employment with MEYM, all new Employee/Worker will be required to enter into a conversation with MEYM management about their vaccination status. MEYM management will provide information and education around the importance of being vaccinated in an Early Childhood Setting.

Vaccination Policy [Best Practice] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

Vaccination Status records

Vaccinated Employee/Worker will be required to provide the approved provider/the employer with acceptable certification (evidence) of their vaccination status (i.e. whether they have been fully vaccinated or not) and any medical exemption (if applicable) upon request.

Employee/Workers have the right to privacy with regards to their vaccination status. The employer will comply with privacy obligations and in particular, will not disclose any information about an individual's personal, vaccination or health status, except where required for operational or safety reasons, at law or in accordance with a public health order, on a need to know basis (such as, to designated members of the Board of Management or where it is necessary to confirm vaccination status).

Storage of vaccination Status records

It is recommended that vaccination records be kept on the premises either in hardcopy or electronic format in a secure location with restricted access.

Vaccination records are to be stored in accordance with the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* and kept on each staff record:

- Disclosure of a staff vaccination status without consent is permitted if the collection of this information is required or authorised by Australian law.
- Prior consent from staff is not required if collecting and storing vaccination information for the purposes of complying with the Directions under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)*
- Only nominated person/s appointed by the Board of Management can be permitted access to confidential vaccination records.

Medically Exempt persons

MEYM management will provide ongoing support, advice and information to any staff who has a medical exemption from vaccinations and will be reminded to adhere to the COVID Safe Plans at individual services.

Management will not ask Employee/Employee/Worker for the documentation however if staff request that this information be kept on file a copy will be placed on the employees personal staff file.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- Regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness;
- Monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy and ensure satisfactory resolutions have been achieved;
- Keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- Revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required;
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

Vaccination Policy [Best Practice] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy and procedure. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to General definitions section in the policy and procedure folder.

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue. Definitions that relate specifically to this policy are listed below.

Acceptable certification:

An acceptable certification for the purpose of this policy includes:

- a current COVID-19 digital certificate issued by Services Australia and displayed through the Medicare App, Service Victoria App or equivalent smartphone wallet that states that the person is unable to receive a dose, or a further dose, of any COVID-19 vaccine that is available in Australia; or
- a printed version of their COVID-19 digital certificate; or
- a current Immunisation History Statement displayed through the Medicare App, that states that the person is unable to receive a dose of a COVID vaccine that is available in Australia (whether that person has already received one or two doses of a COVID vaccine); or
- a printed version of their Immunisation History Statement; or
- Evidence to satisfy the employer of a medical exemption (medically exempt person or temporarily medically exempt person) as issued by their treating medical practitioner (e.g. a medical certificate).

Anti-discrimination legislation: means

- *Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*

Booster vaccination:

- A person has received a booster dose if they have received:
- a second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine after receiving one dose of a one-dose COVID-19 vaccine; or
- a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine after receiving two doses of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine including different types of two dose COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19: means a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2.

COVID-19 vaccine: a one dose COVID-19 vaccine or a two dose COVID-19 vaccine as described in the [Guidance for the Pandemic \(Workplace\) Order 2022 \(No. 8\)](#).

- One dose COVID-19 vaccine means 'COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen' (Janssen-Cilag);
- Two dose COVID-19 vaccine means any of the following:
 - Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca);
 - Comirnaty (Pfizer);
 - Spikevax (Moderna);
 - Coronavac (Sinovac);
 - Covishield (AstraZeneca/Serum Institute of India);
 - Covaxin (Bharat Biotech);

Vaccination Policy [Best Practice] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

- BBIP-CorV (Sinopharm);
- Sputnik V (Gamaleya Research Institute);
- Nuvaxovid (Biocelect on behalf of Novavax);

COVID-19 PCR test: a COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction test.

COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT): a COVID-19 rapid antigen test.

Early childhood education or care services: means onsite early childhood education and care services or children's services provided under the:

- [Children's Services Act 1996](#) including limited hours services, budget based funded services, occasional care services, early childhood intervention services, mobile services and (if applicable) school holiday care programs; or
- [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#) and the [Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011](#) include long day care services, kindergarten/preschool, and family day care services, but do not include outside school hours care services.

Employee/Worker: means for the purposes of this policy:

- any person who is employed by an education operator to work in an education facility (including teachers, early childhood educators and educational support staff).
- staff of any other entity who attends an education facility.
- volunteers that attend an education facility and that work in close proximity to children, students, or staff (including parent helpers and the Committee of Management);
- students on placements at an education facility.

But does not include (while recommended):

- education staff directly employed by an agency.
- a person attending an education facility outside of the education facility's normal operating hours, where the facility is hired, leased, operated or controlled by a community group; or example: Employee/Worker attending an education facility for community sporting activities outside of normal operating hours.
- a person attending an education facility outside of the education facility's normal operating hours for the purposes of polling activities for an election conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission or Victorian Electoral Commission, provided no children or students that attend the educational facility are present. Example: a candidate for a state or federal election attending an educational facility for a site visit outside of normal operating hours.¹
- staff of the Department of Education and Training who attend an education facility (such as allied health personnel or Authorised Officers);
- a person providing healthcare services at an education facility.

Health and safety representative: has the same meaning as in the [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 \(Victoria\)](#).

Infectious disease: An infectious disease designated by the Communicable Disease Section Department of Health Victoria (DH) as well as those listed in Schedule 7 of the [Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019](#).

- a paediatrician; or
- a medical practitioner who is a fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians;

Pandemic: is an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a wide geographic area and affecting a large proportion of the population.

Vaccination Policy [Best Practice] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

Work premises: means premises in which work is undertaken, including any vehicle whilst being used for work purposes, but excluding a person's ordinary place of residence.

Up-to-date: A person is up-to-date on their vaccination status, as defined by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) in their clinical guidance for the [use of COVID-19 vaccines](#) (10 February 2022):³

Sources

- Australian Government COVID-19 website - <https://www.australia.gov.au/>
- Australian Government Department of Health - <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions>
- SafeWork Australia - <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces>
- WorkSafe Victoria : <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/consultation>
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission: <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/>
- Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) statements: <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-technical-advisory-group-on-immunisation-atagi>

Legislation and Standards

Relevant legislation and standards which formed the basis of this policy:

- *Guidance for the Pandemic (Workplace) Order 2022 (No. 8)* – (Vic) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/workplace-order>.
- ~~*Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth)~~
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic).

Policy Control

Approving Authority	Merri-bek Early Years Management Board
Date Approved	July 2023

³ Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). ATAGI statement on defining 'up-to-date' status for COVID-19 vaccination. 10 February 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-technical-advisory-group-on-immunisation-atagi>

Vaccination Policy [Best Practice] (QA 2 Children's Health and Safety)

Date Effective	
Policy Category	Organisational
Edition	V2
Review Date	2025

This policy and its contents were referenced from Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA).

The most current amendments to list legislation can be found at:

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: w.legislation.gov.au