

August 18, 2021

Memorandum to: Chairs of District School Boards
Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: **COVID-19: Immunization Disclosure Policy & Testing Requirements**

The government is committed to students and staff returning to a more normal, full-time, safer, in-person learning environment this fall. As Ontario continues with its vaccination program and rollout, amidst a rapid spread of the Delta variant, the province's number one priority is getting as many Ontarians vaccinated as possible. All vaccines delivered as part of Ontario's vaccine rollout provide high levels of effectiveness against hospitalization and death from COVID-19 and its variants, including the Delta variant. To date, more than 20 million of doses have been administered in Ontario.

As announced on August 17, 2021, the Ministry of Education intends to introduce an immunization disclosure policy for all publicly-funded school board employees, and staff in private schools and licensed child care settings for the 2021-22 school year, with rapid antigen testing requirements for staff who are not immunized against COVID-19. This plan aligns with immunization measures already in place in Ontario's long-term care settings, and new requirements announced in health care and congregate care settings.

School Board Employees:

The Ministry of Education will require all school boards to implement a COVID-19 immunization disclosure policy as an additional tool to advance safety and support local public health units in working with school boards to follow [COVID-19 Guidance: School Case, Contact, and Outbreak Management](#).

The policy will require that school boards ensure all school board employees undertake one of the following:

1. Provide proof of full vaccination against COVID-19; or
2. Provide a formal/official documented medical reason for not being vaccinated against COVID-19; or
3. Participate in an educational program approved by the Ministry of Education.

This approach will also apply to student placements, frequent school visitors (e.g. school nutrition program staff), and other professionals who deliver services in schools. It will also apply to student transportation drivers employed by transportation consortia.

School board employees, student transportation drivers, frequent visitors and other professionals, who are not immunized, including those with medical reasons, will be required to complete regular COVID-19 testing as directed in provincial guidance.

The means of obtaining, administering and reporting the test will be communicated in the near future.

School boards and transportation partners will be required to track and report on the implementation of the policy, provide aggregated and depersonalized statistical information to the ministry and publicly disclose board-level immunization status data on a regular basis. To support a consistent approach, the ministry will undertake consultations with school boards in the near future.

Subject to Lieutenant Governor-In-Council (LGIC) approval, this policy will be outlined in regulations under the *Education Act*.

Further details and guidance will be provided to support school boards in implementing the proposed policy, testing approach, and reporting expectations for early Fall 2021.

Youth Vaccination Eligibility:

As of August 16, over 69% of youth aged 12-17 have received a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and over 56% have received a second dose. While this progress is significant, higher vaccination rates will help stop the spread of COVID-19 and allow students, families, and staff to more safely resume normal activities.

To ensure more children and youth can benefit from the protection offered by the vaccine, the province will also extend eligibility to the Pfizer vaccine to children born in 2009 or earlier. Starting on Wednesday August 18, all children turning 12 years old before the end of 2021 will be eligible for their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

School-Focused Vaccination Clinics:

To promote vaccination uptake, the government is asking all local public health units and school boards to plan and host vaccination clinics in or nearby schools to combat COVID-19.

Local public health units will work with school boards to host school-focused clinics into the fall, aimed at youth, their families, school board employees and students of local private schools who have not yet received a first or second dose.

School boards are asked to prioritize the use of school space to support clinics. School-focused clinics can operate before, during, or after school hours. Clinics can either be on school property or be off-site in partnership with school boards and operate like any other vaccine clinic.

Like all other medical procedures, COVID-19 vaccines are only provided with informed consent. In Ontario, there is no age limit that sets out when people can provide informed consent and make medical decisions on their own. Consent can be provided by anyone who is capable of doing so, including those aged 12 to 17. This means they understand the treatment, why it is being recommended, and the risks and benefits if they accept or refuse to be vaccinated. It is the role of the health provider to determine if their patient can consent to treatment and is a regular and routine process that health providers undertake before performing any medical procedure. If a child or youth is incapable of consenting to receiving the vaccine, they would need consent from their substitute decision-maker, such as their parent or legal guardian. The health care provider, school, and family must respect a young person's decision regarding vaccination.

School boards and schools are asked to disseminate information from local public health units on the informed consent process to all students, parents, and guardians prior to hosting/participating in a school-based clinic. Schools and school boards are also asked to provide notification to students, parents and guardians on when a school focused vaccination clinic will be hosted by a school. Parents and guardians should be encouraged to discuss vaccination with their children prior to attending a clinic; however, they are not required to provide consent unless the child is unable to. COVID-19 vaccination is voluntary for anyone eligible in Ontario.

Promoting vaccination through a consistent provincial policy for school boards and licensed child care settings will support our students, families and communities as we enter the 2021-22 school year.

Thank you for your continued to commitment to the safety and well being of students, staff and families.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lecce
Minister

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

c: Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario
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