# Disability Services – Mandatory Vaccination requirements

Webinar 10 June 2022

#### Q: Are existing workers, who have not had their booster no longer required to be fully vaccinated, for example, if they have been on maternity leave or had a temporary exemption?

A: If they have a requirement under the booster vaccine directions, they are required to have the booster to enter premises if they're greater than three months after their second dose.

#### Q: Is vaccination a requirement for employment of new support workers?

A: That’s a decision for employers, but they cannot currently be employed in a residential care role.

#### Q: Can unvaccinated workers who are not employed in a residential disability support role return to work for example, support workers who assist people with disability in the community?

A: There is nothing restricting them from returning to work, but it is a decision by the employer as to whether they can employ them in those roles. The Directions do not prohibit that.

#### Q: Some organisations will continue to require masks as these are reasonable PPE control measures, is it also reasonable to require COVID vaccination, as is the case in some settings for flu vaccination?

A: That is up to the employer. An employer may decide to continue to require vaccinations as another measure to protect both staff and clients. It is it up to the employer to go beyond what's required in the directions.

#### Q: Does the mandate extend to a person receiving high intensity supports in their own home? Would the same response apply in co-residency models of support that is delivered in the disability support area? For example, multiple people with disability living in a private facility that has support workers coming and going.

A: No, it does not. The mandate refers to staffed residential facilities. If people are in a co-residency arrangement but they are at home, it’s treated as their home. It is appreciated there are very different models and if there is a particular model where there is felt to be a higher risk, this can be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

#### Q: At the moment people with disability are encouraged to have a winter COVID booster (fourth dose). Is this going to be extended to disability support workers in the high risk settings?

A: ATAGI has not recommended a fourth dose to any occupational groups; at this stage it is not going to be extended to this group.

#### Q: Could you please confirm that the following is still applicable to the vaccine mandate – aged care staff in the Community; People with disability staff in the community; aged care respite facilities and supported accommodation for people with disability; mental health staff in the community, for example FDV refuges for young women.

A: If the service is providing healthcare, community healthcare support or similar support in the community it is not covered by these Directions; the Community Services Directions that had covered these areas have been revoked.

These directions are around staffed residential aged care facilities or disability services facilities.

#### Q: We are a community provider and often pick up and drop off participants to disability accommodation facilities. Are our support workers required to be vaccinated to attend these facilities?

A: Workers who regularly enter disability accommodation facilities will require to be vaccinated as per the directions. For example, workers who enter the facilities to assist people with disability will be captured under the directions.

If a worker does so only on an ad-hoc basis, they will not require vaccination. However, it should be stated that ‘ad-hoc’ is considered to be less than once a week at any facility at all; for example, if a worker does one day per week at three different facilities in a week, this is not considered ‘ad-hoc’.

#### Q: Has the mandate been revoked for supported employees who work in an Australian Disability Enterprise environment?

A: It is believed that they would have previously been covered by the Community Care Mandates. This will be checked and an updated answer provided.

#### Q: Do private practice psychology services who see NDIS clients need to be vaccinated?

A: Private practice psychology providers are covered under the Primary Care Mandatory Vaccinations Directions, which remain in force.

#### Q: Where a provider is operating a shared living option so that multiple people are living in that facility or house, but the house is not staffed 24/7, can the provider prevent unvaccinated workers employed by a different service provider from entering?

A: It does not appear these would be covered under the Directions, but this would be considered on a case-by-case basis if required.

#### Q: In relation to the above question, how could a provider or person seek information on a particular circumstance if they wanted a ruling?

A: In the event that a provider or person is seeking advice on a particular circumstance, they can contact the Chief Health Officer’s office via email to cho@health.wa.gov.au. The office will continue to update FAQs as rulings are made, through the Department of Health website.

#### Q: If people are seeking support or have questions about their contract with the Department of Communities, where should they seek assistance?

A: All providers contracted to Communities should contact their contract manager in the first instance.

#### Q: We are a non-residential service and have some support workers who have not had a third dose. Are they now no longer required to be vaccinated with that third dose?

A: If they are not providing residential health care, they are no longer required to have their third dose. However, everyone is strongly encouraged to have their third dose to provide better protection against the serious effects of COVID. The low rates of hospitalisation and ICU admissions are, it appears, largely a result of the high rates of three-dose vaccinations. Unfortunately we are still seeing people who have only had two doses seriously over-represented.