

Covid-19 Vaccination

Policy

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Version	Active from	Author	Changes made
1.0	14 September 2021	Operational Policy	First Version
1.1	10 December 2021	Operational Policy	Eligibility expanded to include children from 5 years of age
2.0	26 May 2022	Operational Policy	Extensive revisions to policy to strengthen support for vaccination for children and young people, remove ambiguity in relation to consent and clarify the process and authority to seek a medical exemption, where it is considered that COVID-19 vaccination may be contraindicated.

Acronyms	Full form
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CYJO	Community Youth Justice Officer
PHCP	Primary Health Care Provider
SATS	Specialist Assessment and Treatment Services
SBA	Supported Bail Accommodation
YJO	Youth Justice Officer
YOREO	Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Officer

1. Policy Purpose

Receipt of the COVID-19 vaccination is in a child or young person's best interest. Children and young people who are in the care of the CEO, or in youth detention, or supported bail accommodation, are to be provided with information about the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccinations and actively encouraged and supported to receive the vaccination and booster vaccinations as they become eligible.

2. Policy Statement

Child Protection Practitioners, SATS Case Coordinators, YJOs and YOREOs are to provide information about the desirability, safety, and efficacy of the vaccination to all eligible children and young people, and the family and carers they are working with, encourage participation in the vaccination program, and obtain consents if needed.

Vaccination of eligible children has been determined by the Department to be in a child or young person's best interests. However, the COVID-19 vaccination is not mandatory. A young person may refuse to receive the vaccination. If initially unwilling to be vaccinated children and young people are to be supported to understand the benefits and safety of the vaccination and strongly encouraged to participate in the program.

It is not permitted for staff or a child or young person's Carers to discourage a child or young person from receiving the vaccination, to refuse to provide consent for the vaccination, or fail to support the child or young person to attend an appointment to receive the vaccination.

Children, young people and their carers may be assisted to make a vaccination appointment online, or directly with an Aboriginal Health service, General Practice, community clinic, or pharmacy.

Go to <https://covid19appointment.nt.gov.au/#/appointment>.

If the child is fearful of receiving an injection, consult with the health provider when arranging the appointment for advice on how to reduce potential anxiety.

2.1. Eligibility

Children in the Northern Territory from age 5-11 are eligible for the paediatric COVID-19 vaccination. Consent to receive the vaccination must be provided by the child's guardian or kinship or foster carer.

Young people over the age of 12 are eligible to receive the adult COVID-19 vaccination, they are currently not eligible to receive the booster.

Anyone over the age of 16 is considered up to date with COVID-19 vaccination only when they have received 3 vaccinations (the original plus 2 boosters). If it is longer than 6 months since receiving the last vaccination and the child is eligible for a booster, they are considered 'overdue'.

Go to <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au> for up-to-date information. Eligibility criteria can change at any time.

2.2. Medical exemptions

In specific and limited circumstances, there may be a medical reason why a child or young person is not able to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Only an authorised health professional can record a medical exemption for an individual, based on a medical assessment of the individual's temporary or permanent risk factors in relation to known vaccination side effects.

Carers are not permitted to seek a medical exemption on behalf of a child or young person. If a Carer is concerned that the child or young person should be medically exempted, they are to raise the concern with the relevant Departmental staff member who will arrange for an assessment by a health professional. Only authorised health professionals can make an exemption determination.

An exemption may be temporary or may be in response to a recent COVID-19 infection, or a permanent exemption. Additionally, in some cases, a particular type of COVID-19 vaccine will be recommended (and other types contraindicated) due to a young person's medical history.

A permanent exemption will only be granted if an authorised health professional has determined that all available vaccines are contraindicated, and the medical contraindication is permanent. Refer to: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccine-who-can-get-an-exemption-easy-read>

An individual's medical exemption is recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register by the authorised health professional using the [Australian Immunisation Register - Immunisation medical exemption form](#).

2.3. Consent

For children in care, Kinship and Foster Carers are permitted to sign a consent form in the circumstances detailed below. Carers are not permitted to refuse or delay consent for a vaccination, or to attempt to dissuade a child or young person from receiving a COVID-19 vaccination or inhibit receipt of the vaccination.

Young people aged 16 years and over can consent to receive the vaccine by signing the consent form when attending the vaccination appointment. If under 16 the following consents apply:

- **For children aged 5 to 15 years who are subject to a Protection Order giving parental responsibility to the CEO alone**, consent to receive the vaccine may be provided by the child's Kinship or Foster Carer. The Carer must attend the vaccination appointment with the child.
- If the vaccination is provided through the **School Vaccine Program** no adult is required to attend, however a signed consent will still be needed for children under 16.
- **For children aged 5 to 15 years who are not in the care of the CEO**, or who are subject to a protection order granting parental responsibility to a third party (alone or shared), the consent of their parent or guardian, or the person who has been granted parental responsibility is required.
- **For young people in youth detention, who are under 16 and not in the care of the CEO, SATS or YJO** staff must obtain the informed consent of the young person's parent or guardian. The vaccination will be given by the centre's Primary Health Care Provider.
- **For young people living in Supported Bail Accommodation under 16 and not in the care of the CEO**. CYJOs are to obtain the informed consent of the young person's parent or guardian. The SBA Manager will arrange for young person to book a vaccination and attend the appointment.

The consent of a parent or guardian is required for any young person who does not have the capacity to provide their own consent, regardless of their age.

3. Recording

Vaccination records are maintained by the Commonwealth Department of Health and are available through the MyGov Medicare portal. The young person may be assisted to download a digital vaccination certificate to their mobile phone. A PDF of the vaccination record may also be stored in their CMS (e.g. CARE/CCIS, IOMS or InReach) file where applicable.