



Diocese of Niagara COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

Intent

The Bishop of the Diocese of Niagara has enacted this policy to increase the protection and safety of our parishioners, clergy, employees, and all whom we serve by reducing the transmission of COVID-19 in our church and office buildings and other ministry spaces. Achieving high immunization rates is 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.

Applicability

Those functioning in ministry roles have been entrusted with responsibilities which include protection of the vulnerable. As such, the following people will be required to be immunized with a COVID-19 vaccine series approved by Health Canada, unless a legal exemption has been granted, to serve in the Diocese of Niagara during this pandemic:

- all clergy holding a Bishop's licence or permission;
- all licensed lay workers and diocesan staff;
- all liturgical leaders including, but not limited to:
 - musicians and vocalists;
 - readers, intercessors, servers, and communion assistants;
 - wardens;
 - greeters, ushers, and sidespeople;
 - livestreaming and video production teams;
- 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.

To continue serving in these roles, eligible persons must have received their first, second and booster (or third) dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by February 28, 2022.

Vaccination status must be kept current by obtaining booster doses as recommended by public health authorities.

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.

Policy Requirements

For clergy, lay workers & diocesan staff

Proof of vaccination must be submitted via email to Mary Anne Grant (maryanne.grant@niagaraanglican.ca). Alternatively, arrangements may be made to share a copy of the vaccine confirmation via Zoom. Confirmation information (name and date of vaccination) will be stored securely and destroyed upon expiration of this policy. 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.

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 vaccination. Confirmation information will be stored securely and destroyed at the end of the pandemic.

Exemptions Under the *Human Rights Code*

Anyone, be they clergy, lay workers, staff, parish or regional ministers, who is subject to a 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 director of human resources.

Those with a satisfactory exemption will be required to regularly provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test prior to in-person activities, at a frequency determined appropriate by the director of human resources.

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 director of human resources or their designate 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 up to the point of undue hardship. While every attempt to provide a person who requires an exemption with reasonable and dignified accommodation, there may be situations where an individual cannot be accommodated short of undue hardship.

Other Exemptions

Honorary assistants holding a Bishop's permission but who are no longer engaged in active in-person liturgical or pastoral ministry may be granted an exemption by the Bishop.

New office-holders, employees, or volunteers may be partially exempted and accommodated by the Bishop or their designate in order to receive their full vaccination series as recommended by provincial public health officials.

Non-Compliance

Office-holders and employees who do not provide the required proof of vaccination – or a satisfactory medical exemption may be subject to disciplinary action and/or restricted from performing their duties. Those holding a designated position on a volunteer basis may be asked 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. As more information and best practices become known, the policy may be amended by the Bishop of Niagara from time to time.

For more information, please contact Canon Terry DeForest, director of human resources, at terry.deforest@niagaraanglican.ca.