

COVID-19 vaccination policy

Purpose and scope

Ahpra is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace for all workers, and for the health practitioners and members of the public with whom we interact. This includes taking all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the spread of diseases such as COVID-19 in our offices and through our workforce.

Governments in various states and territories have released directions requiring vaccination of some categories of workers, and some professions. While Ahpra recognises that having a vaccination, including the COVID-19 vaccination, is a personal choice, the most effective way to address its health and safety obligations arising from COVID-19 is to introduce requirements that workers must be vaccinated to attend the workplace.

Coverage

This policy applies to all Ahpra workers, a worker is defined as a person who carries out work with Ahpra, including: Agency Management Committee, National Executive, employees, contractors and agency staff, volunteers, interns, work experience staff and statutory appointees (board, committee and panel members).

Policy

In order to minimise the risk of harm to the health, safety and wellbeing of all workers and maintain a safe working environment, Ahpra encourages and requires all workers to be fully vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine schedule to access an Ahpra workplace unless medically contraindicated.

In adopting this approach, Ahpra acknowledges:

- the increased rates of community transmission of the Delta variant of COVID-19 or future variants;
- the significant health risk of COVID-19 infection, including to people who might not previously have been considered to be vulnerable;
- the fact that workers may be required to attend healthcare settings from time to time, or meet with health practitioners, which increases the risk of the virus spreading either to or from the workforce;
- the fact that workers are required to attend the office on an agreed basis to fully perform their duties;
- the fact that even with social distancing and other measures, there is a risk of transmission within the workplace.

Key principles

- Ahpra encourages and requires all workers to be fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine approved or recognised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration unless medically contraindicated or medically exempt to be able to access an Ahpra workplace.
- Access to Ahpra offices and the notification of a worker's vaccination status and proof of vaccination will be informed by Ahpra's jurisdictional implementation dates and / or the public health requirements for each State and Territory (whichever comes first).
- Workers travelling between Ahpra workplaces and / or jurisdictions will need to be fully vaccinated and will comply with the public health orders in the workplaces and /or jurisdiction(s) they are travelling to .

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
National Boards

GPO Box 9958 Melbourne VIC 3001 [Ahpra.gov.au](https://www.ahpra.gov.au) 1300 419 495

Ahpra and the National Boards regulate these registered health professions:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation practice, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.

- This policy will be reviewed monthly or as and when public health advice changes.
- For the purpose of this policy, a worker who chooses not to provide appropriate evidence of their proof of vaccination will be considered to be unvaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccination requirements by jurisdiction

A worker may only attend an Ahpra workplace if they can provide satisfactory evidence that:

- they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, or
- they have had a single dose of a COVID-19 vaccination, and have an appointment to have subsequent dose(s) as appropriate, or
- they are medically exempt from vaccination against COVID-19, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

Where jurisdictions are deemed low risk, ie little to no community transmission, and where the public health position does not mandate or require vaccination to attend workplaces, the commencement date will be phased in over the coming months. A table detailing the implementation dates will be published on the intranet and updated as appropriate.

Where a commencement date is determined, workers who are unable to meet these requirements, may be able to seek approval to work temporarily from home.

Exemptions from COVID-19 vaccination requirements

A worker may attend an Ahpra workplace despite not meeting the vaccination requirements if:

- they have a medical contraindication or are medically exempt from the COVID-19 vaccine; or
- they are temporarily unable to receive a dose, or a further dose of a COVID-19 vaccination due to an acute medical illness.

If a worker believes that they are either permanently or temporarily exempt from the vaccination requirements set out in this policy, or that other exceptional circumstances apply, they must promptly notify their direct line manager or Board Chair before the commencement date.

Providing proof of vaccination or exemption

Evidence of vaccination, exemption or contraindication from a vaccination, or a booking to receive a vaccination, must be sighted and recorded. For employees, this will be recorded through People and Culture prior to or on the commencement date. For Board and Committee members, this will be recorded by Statutory Appointments prior to or on the commencement date.

Evidence of sighting and recording vaccination can include:

- a vaccination certificate or other evidence from a vaccine provider.
- an immunisation history statement which can be accessed from Medicare online or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app.
- a statement of your vaccination history which you can request from the Australian Immunisation Register.
- a record from a registered health practitioner who has administered the vaccine.

Evidence of a medical contraindication or medical exemption will only be accepted if it is recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register and accessible under the Medicare mobile app.

Ahpra will sight this information:

- to ensure that Ahpra knows who is eligible to attend the workplace under this policy,
- to ensure that Ahpra is capable of complying with any public health directions or orders applying in the relevant State or Territory, and
- to enable Ahpra to manage the risks to workers and the community arising from COVID-19, including preparing for any possible future outbreaks.

When collecting this information, Ahpra will comply with its Privacy Policy. Workers' vaccination or exemption status will be securely recorded and kept confidential and will only be accessible to people who are required to access it.

Workers may request to access their vaccination and health information at any time and can also request that any relevant updates are made to it.

Arranging a COVID-19 vaccination

Ahpra will support workers to get vaccinated by allowing employees paid time off to attend an appointment to receive their COVID-19 vaccination.

Workers can access COVID-19 vaccinations at various locations including vaccination hubs, roving clinics, general practices, and some pharmacies. The dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline 1800 020 080 (select option 2) can answer any questions workers may have about vaccination and can help you book a vaccination appointment. Vaccinations are free, and there is no need for a Medicare card to make an appointment or receive the vaccination.

Employees can get their vaccination during the work day and don't need to enter this time in Unit4. Employees do need to let their manager know beforehand.

Un-vaccinated workers (excluding statutory appointees) without an exemption

If a worker is not exempt but chooses not to be vaccinated, the worker must inform their direct line manager prior to the commencement date.

Workers who are not exempt, and who choose not to have a COVID-19 vaccination by the commencement date, will not be permitted to access an Ahpra workplace to perform the duties associated with their role.

If in Ahpra's assessment the worker can temporarily perform their duties from home, then Ahpra may at its discretion direct the worker to undertake their duties from home for a period of no more than three (3) months and can be a shorter period depending on the individual circumstances.

During the nominated agreed period there will be regular contact with the worker by their manager to determine the capacity of the worker to comply with this policy. While Ahpra recognises that flexibility works and that all positions, regardless of function, can operate under a flexible working arrangement, not all positions will be able to be supported to work full-time from home. A flexible working arrangement can be re-assessed if it no longer achieves the operational requirements or position objectives.

If in Ahpra's assessment a worker cannot adequately perform their duties from home, then Ahpra may consider a range of options including but not limited to:

- alternative work arrangements, subject to the operational needs of Ahpra for up to three (3) months
- the worker taking a period of accrued annual and/or long service leave, or
- separation.

Any decision regarding alternative options will be at the absolute discretion of Ahpra, subject to its legal obligations including those under the relevant Enterprise Agreement or Individual contract conditions at the time. It is Ahpra's view however that all workers will be required to attend an Ahpra workplace at some point in time during their employment or engagement.

Workers who choose not to have a COVID-19 vaccination need to be mindful that this may result in the termination of their employment or engagement should they be unable to meet the inherent requirements of their position including, but not limited to, compliance with other policies such as Ahpra's Flexible Working Policy.

Un-vaccinated statutory appointees without an exemption

If a statutory appointee (board, committee or panel member) is not exempt but chooses not to be vaccinated, they must not attend an Ahpra workplace and must inform their Board Chair prior to the commencement date.

The Board Chair and the relevant Ahpra Executive member will consider the implications of the worker's decision on their work in the National Scheme and options to adequately perform the duties associated with their role.

New workers

Workers engaged after the commencement date of this policy will be required to be vaccinated prior to starting their employment/engagement.

Relevant legislation

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following legislation

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 (NT)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA)
- Each State and Territory also has a set of Regulations and Codes of Practice to support the legislation which must be complied with by Ahpra.

Definitions

Term	Definitions
COVID-19 vaccination	A vaccine approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for use in Australia, or where a worker has been vaccinated overseas, a vaccine recognised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.
Employee	A worker directly engaged by Ahpra and whose conditions of employment are captured by the Enterprise Agreement or an individual employment contract.
Fully vaccinated	A worker is fully vaccinated if the person has received the required dosage as defined by a public health order.
Public Health Order	An enforceable government direction which sets out requirements and restrictions for businesses in each state and territory.
Reasonably practicable	<p>That which is, or was at a particular time, reasonably able to be done to ensure health and safety, taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the likelihood of the hazard or risk concerned occurring, • the degree of harm that might result from the hazard or the risk, • what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know about the hazard or risk, and about the ways to eliminate or minimise the risk, • the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk, and • after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, the cost associated with the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk.
Visitor	A person who is not a worker who is attending an Ahpra workplace for any purpose.
Worker	A person who carries out work with Ahpra, including: Agency Management Committee; National Executive; employees; contractors and agency staff; volunteers; interns; work experience staff; and statutory appointees (board, committee and panel members).
Workplace	For the purposes of this policy, any place or location where a worker conducts work on behalf of Ahpra including an Ahpra controlled office, field-work or off-site locations but excluding the work-from-home environment.

Document control

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