



25 October 2022

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s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H2022013936

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) on 4 October 2022, for information regarding vaccination requirements and health care settings.

Before responding to each part of your request, it's important to note that from 26 September 2022, all remaining Government vaccination mandates ended. This means that health and disability workers in public facing roles are no longer required by the Government to be vaccinated. Many workers who stopped working due to being unvaccinated could be eligible to return to work, however some health sector employers will make their own decisions to require that workers in certain roles are vaccinated. More details and information on vaccination requirements are available at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus.

For each part of your request, please find our response below.

*I have recently been informed by MHAIDS HR s 9(2)(a) at CCDHB that there is a current Covid-19 vaccine for health workers in place.
Can you please provide me with a copy of the policy and the latest risk assessment?*

Manatū Hauora does not hold any documents in scope for this part of your request. As such this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the document(s) requested does not exist.

*Additionally, since the population groups who are at risk of covid-19 are known, can you please provide a rationale for this requirement to be placed across the board in all settings?
For example, since teenagers are not at risk of Covid-19, what is the rationale for applying such requirements in adolescent mental health wards?
Also, can you please provide a rationale for not including RAT tests as option for those who choose or are unable for medical reasons to not vaccinate against covid-19?*

The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 (the Order) was enacted to keep our COVID-19 frontline staff safe and to ensure our most vulnerable communities are protected from severe illness and from being exposed to any new variants. It is important to protect those most vulnerable groups and the mandates played a key role in this. It is also important to note that vaccine mandates were not intended to negatively impact the freedoms, rights, or health of New Zealanders, but rather protect vulnerable groups of people like the elderly and those with underlying health conditions from COVID-19.

Vaccination remains one of the key responses to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19. With high rates of vaccination in both the health worker and general population the best

protection is from the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or face masks, and ventilation to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

In relation to your question around the rationale for applying vaccination requirements in adolescent mental health wards, given the low risk of COVID-19 for young people, it is important to note that people of all age groups have been infected with COVID-19, with over 1.7 million people confirmed cases. While it is true that the risk of serious illness, hospitalisation and death is greater for older people, there have also been some serious health implications for certain younger people due to COVID-19, including due to long COVID. It is important for young people to get vaccinated not just to reduce severity of illness for them, but also to protect those more vulnerable groups including youth in acute mental health or hospital care. More details and information on COVID-19 case data by age group can be found on Manatū Hauora website at: <https://covid19.health.nz/advice/covid-19-data#age-group-data>.

On your final question, Manatū Hauora does not advise Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for asymptomatic people due to the decreased accuracy of results for this group. They are recommended for people who feel unwell with COVID-19 symptoms, or for those who live in the same household as someone who has COVID-19. Further information on RAT accuracy can be found at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-testing/rapid-antigen-testing-rat#regulatory

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



Steve Waldegrave
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Strategy, Policy and Legislation | Te Pou Rautaki