

# Memo

## COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) position statement: Vaccination mandates in those under 18 years of age

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**Date:** 9 December 2021

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**To:** Dr Ashley Bloomfield, Director-General of Health

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**Cc:** Astrid Koorneef, Director of National Operations, COVID Vaccine Immunisation Programme  
Maree Roberts, DDG, System Strategy and Policy  
Dr Caroline McElnay, Director of Public Health

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**From:** Dr Ian Town, Chief Science Advisor

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**For your:** Consideration

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### Purpose of report

1. To state the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group's (CV TAG) position on requiring two doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to fulfil vaccine mandates in those aged under 18 years.

### Context

2. In November 2021, CV TAG advice was sought to determine the definition of fully vaccinated within New Zealand.
3. That advice set out which vaccination schedules would allow an individual to be considered fully vaccinated and was signed by you on 11 November 2021.
4. This definition of fully vaccinated has been used to immediate effect as part of mandatory vaccination orders and the issuing of vaccination certificates.
5. As part of its recommendations, CV TAG noted in this memo that 'younger age groups are more at risk than older age groups of myocarditis after the second dose of Pfizer vaccine, while a robust antibody response and early limited clinical effectiveness data indicate some protection from COVID-19 after a **single dose** of Pfizer vaccine in these younger age groups'.
6. Consequently, CV TAG expressed concern about vaccine mandates requiring younger age groups (e.g. <18 years) to be vaccinated with 2 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and stated: **'consideration should be given to permitting younger people who have had one dose to be permitted to work or undertake other activities covered by the mandate'**.
7. This particular detail has not been carried through to the implementation of this advice.
8. CV TAG met on 23 and 30 November 2021 and discussed the requirement for two doses of the Pfizer vaccine in those aged <18 years, noting a wish to reiterate their previous position.

9. **CV TAG noted that:**

- a. The individual risk to young people of severe disease is very low. For them to make an informed decision not to get a second dose of the vaccine eg, due to potential myocarditis risk is justified.
- b. Risks associated with the transmission of COVID-19 throughout Aotearoa New Zealand among those aged <18 years are insufficient to justify mandating a 2 dose schedule of the Pfizer vaccine prior to working in any environment.
- c. The 2 dose schedule, particularly when administered in the shortest possible clinical timeframe, may add unnecessary risk to increasing the likelihood of myocarditis as an outcome in this population.
- d. Requiring vaccination certificates for children could produce unintended consequences such as exclusion from educational activities
- e. 2 doses of Pfizer vaccine represent a full primary course of vaccination, but in the young (aged <18 years), there should not be pressure to receive these doses at the shortest possible interval as indicated by the current approach to vaccination certificates and mandates.
- f. Aside from the mandatory vaccination settings, informal exclusions are facilitated by issuing vaccination certificates for those under the age of 18 years, disproportionately disadvantaging children against a minimal reduction in public health risk.

10. **CV TAG recommends that consideration be given to:**

- a. Those aged <18 years only being required to have received 1 dose of Pfizer vaccine to meet the vaccine requirements for employment.

11. CV TAG will continue to monitor all relevant information and will update their recommendations as further evidence becomes available.

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Dr Ian Town

**Chief Science Advisor and**

**Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group**