

# **COVID-19 Vaccine Informed Consent for Young People Aged 12-15 Years Policy Statement**

## **COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunisation Programme**

**Version 1.0**  
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## Introduction

COVID-19 vaccines are being rolled out in New Zealand/Aotearoa through the COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunisation Programme (the Programme) run by the Ministry of Health (the Ministry). This is New Zealand's largest immunisation programme.

The Programme will offer free COVID-19 vaccinations to everyone who is eligible in New Zealand/Aotearoa. Medsafe recently gave provisional approval for the use of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (the vaccine) for those aged 12 and over, as previously the vaccine was only approved for those 16 and over. Cabinet then considered advice provided by the Ministry and approved the 'decision to use' for our young people aged 12-15 years.

The United Nations (UN) have asked governments to prioritise children's rights in the development of policy related to COVID-19 in a manner that is consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child [1]. With the eligibility criteria extending to those aged 12-15 years this provides an opportunity for the Programme to provide guidance and a policy statement about the informed consent process for our younger people.

## Purpose

To provide guidance and a policy statement on informed consent for the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine to our young people aged 12-15 years. It also functions to clearly identify the different requirements for school, community and facility or residential care-based vaccination.

## Policy Statement

The Programme eligibility criteria for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine includes those aged 12 years and over.

## Giving Consent

**We recommend young people aged 12-15 years discuss the vaccination with whānau or a trusted support person.**

Young people can find out more information about how the vaccine protects them and answers to questions they may have on the Ministry of Health website.

### *Community-based vaccination*

A health professional will discuss the vaccination with the young person prior to giving the vaccine and can answer any questions. If the young person has a good understanding, they can say yes or no to getting the vaccine themselves. A parent or caregiver can provide consent if preferred.

### *School-based vaccination*

The Programme will align its policy with previous school-based vaccination programmes and require written consent from the young person's parent or guardian for all COVID-19 vaccines administered in schools.

*Facility or residential care-based vaccination*

Young people who reside in a care facility or a residence under the care of Oranga Tamariki will follow their usual process for informed consent for other medical treatments and vaccination.

## Policy Statement Objectives

The following section outlines the programme objectives for the different elements of the policy statement related to informed consent for our younger people aged 12-15 years.

1. School-based vaccination
2. Community-based vaccination
3. Facility or residential care-based vaccination

### 1. School-based vaccination

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- 1.1 All school-based vaccinations will adhere to the Ministry of Health's Professional Standards for School-based Immunisation Service Delivery.
  - 1.1 The Programme will provide age-appropriate information to young people to help inform their decision. This will include after vaccination care and advice.
  - 1.2 The Immunisation Advisory Centre will provide an online learning module to support healthcare providers with the consent process for younger people.
  - 1.3 Education providers will provide students, and parents and guardians information about the vaccine that aligns with the Ministry's guidance and education materials to help inform their decision.
  - 1.4 The Programme will provide consent forms for education providers to give to those who are eligible for the vaccine allowing enough time to support family/ whanau-based decision making.
  - 1.5 School based vaccination providers will adhere to Ministry of Education informed consent policy when administering the vaccine, in that written consent is obtained from a parent or guardian prior to vaccine administration and the details recorded in the COVID Immunisation Register (CIR). This includes all students aged 12 and over.
  - 1.6 Healthcare providers administering the vaccine will engage with and inform students about the vaccine and confirm the student's consent prior to vaccination.
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### 2. Community-based vaccination

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- 2.1 Healthcare provider will presume the young person aged 12-15 years is competent unless there is a reason to consider them not to be. The Programme will provide age-appropriate information to young people to help inform their decision. This will include after vaccination care and advice information.
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- 2.2 Healthcare providers will recognise that aged 12-15 years have the right to give informed consent for the vaccination where competent to do so, and their decision is recorded in the CIR.
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- 2.3 Healthcare providers are required to use their professional judgement to evaluate the young person's competence, understanding and maturity to form a balanced judgement to ensure they have the ability to provide informed consent.
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- 2.4 Where a healthcare provider is not satisfied a young person is capable of giving informed consent then either a second opinion should be sought, or parent or guardian informed written consent is obtained.
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- 2.5 When consent has been appropriately obtained on their behalf, the provider will provide the young people aged 12-15 years with information about the vaccine in an age-appropriate way and respond to and consider their views.
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- 2.6 The Immunisation Advisory Centre will provide an online learning module to support healthcare providers with the consent process for younger people.
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### 3. Facility or residential care-based vaccination

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- 3.1 Where a young person lives in a residence or supported accommodation, the informed consent will follow their usual process for other medical treatments and vaccination.
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- 3.2 Healthcare providers must recognise the young person's views and wishes, and where there is disagreement, consultation with and advice from legal services, and the consumer's usual healthcare provider would be required.
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- 3.3 Healthcare providers will utilise supported decision-making tools where appropriate to ensure the consumer has a good understanding of the vaccination and their decision is recorded in the CIR.
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## References

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