



Chief Practitioner's COVID-19 UPDATE

Dr Meegan Crawford | Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

10 January 2022

Dear parents, foster and kinship carers

From 10 January 2022, children five and over are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. It is our priority to do all we can to keep children in care safe and well, so it is crucial that they are vaccinated. To find the nearest vaccination location, go to www.covid19vaccine.qld.gov.au

Our child safety officers will support all children and young people aged five years old and over to be vaccinated. As parents and carers, I hope someone has spoken to you about this plan. Please reach out to your child safety office if you have any questions. If you have concerns about the vaccination, please visit the [Australian Government Department of Health website](http://www.health.gov.au) or [the Queensland Health website](http://www.health.qld.gov.au) for the information you need.

I wanted to reiterate the steps departmental staff have been asked to take to keep children safe and well during the pandemic.

- **Consent** – where a young person is capable of making an informed decision about their immunisation, this will be respected.
 - [Queensland Health's Guide to Young Person Informed Consent](#) gives some general guidance around informed consent guidelines for different age groups.
 - Young people aged 12 – 17 years *'may be Mature Minors/Gillick competent. This means that a young person may be able to give consent for vaccination. This is dependent on the individual young person'*.
 - Children aged 5 – 11 years *'cannot be Mature Minors/Gillick competent. This means that a child cannot give consent for vaccination'*.
 - If the child cannot consent, the child's carer or residential care worker can sign a consent form on their behalf if they are subject to the Chief Executive's guardianship.
 - If a parent retains guardianship, we will ask that you sign this for your child (if the child cannot consent themselves) and if you are worried about the vaccine, we can arrange for you to discuss this with a GP.
 - For those parents who retain guardianship and will not sign the consent form for children who cannot consent themselves, Child Safety will ask a health practitioner to assess the suitability of the child receiving the vaccine and administer the vaccine using the authority of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 97(3) (Request to medically examine or treat a child) if this is assessed to be in their

best interest. I encourage you to discuss your concerns with your child safety officer and a doctor. Current expert medical advice, is clear that the vaccine is safe and appropriate for children and young people five years and older and therefore the department accepts this advice.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services** – we acknowledge that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people may feel much more comfortable receiving their vaccine from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service and this will be facilitated as requested.

As the safety of young people in care is our highest priority, the department's position is firm. **All eligible young people should be vaccinated to keep them safe and healthy.** As parents and carers, and the people who are so very important to young people, I encourage you to assist with this and for yourself to be vaccinated.

Keep informed

We will continue to provide information on COVID-19 through:

- Department website
- Carer Connect app
- Foster and kinship care service providers.

If you have any questions and need to talk to your child safety officer, please email them in the first instance. Alternatively, you can call your child safety service centre or contact the Foster and Kinship Carer Support Line on 1300 729 309.

It's important that you continue to follow health advice to stay safe and well. For up-to-date Queensland COVID-19 information, please visit the [Queensland Health website](#).

Warm regards

Leanne Black

Acting Chief Practitioner
Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs