

10 December 2021

COVID-19 update

Dear colleagues

As you are aware, the Queensland Government has announced that the Queensland borders will be opened to fully vaccinated people from 1am 13 December 2021. This has been triggered by the state reaching the milestone of 80 per cent of Queenslanders being fully vaccinated.

It is expected that once the borders open, we will see an increase in the number of Queenslanders infected with COVID-19. This will directly impact the staff and clients of human service agencies.

As you will know, the Chief Health Officer is encouraging all Queenslanders over the age of 12 to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

It's crucial children in care are vaccinated.

We know that children in care are more likely to have long-term physical health issues and that we need to do all we can to keep them safe and well, and support their right to healthcare and wellbeing.

If you haven't already, I am asking you to look at every eligible young person you work with and make every effort to support their vaccination. We are also writing to carers and parents about the importance of vaccinations.

The Queensland Government will mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for all private healthcare staff across the state, including staff working in hospitals, aged care and disability services. Under this Direction, everyone working in healthcare must be vaccinated by 15 December. I encourage you to review the [Workers in a healthcare setting \(COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements\) Direction](#), noting the definition of **healthcare** includes support to promote and improve a person's health and wellbeing. Schedule 1 of the Direction provides definitions of individuals and organisations that are in scope for the Direction.

In addition, workers in specific high-risk settings will be required to be vaccinated. These settings include youth detention centres, and school and early childhood settings.

All workers entering these settings will need to have at least one vaccination dose by 17 December 2021, and be fully vaccinated by 23 January 2022. The definition of a worker includes the employees, contractors, union officials, volunteers, regulators, auditors, teachers, support workers, health workers and couriers visiting these services. Human services workers will be considered a worker in a high risk setting even though they may only occasionally enter these settings as part of their work duties. These workers will need to be vaccinated by the deadlines outlined above. This will have an impact for all funded services working with children and young people. Question and Answers have been published on the [Queensland Health website](#).

Based on the experience of other jurisdictions, it is expected that a portion of the human services workforce will be hesitant to receive the necessary vaccinations and some will refuse outright, resulting in these workers being unable to continue in their role.

In this context it is timely to remind you of the need to ensure your business continuity plans are up to date and take account of the likely COVID impacts on staffing and clients. This will be particularly critical for services providing care to children, who may be required to manage the provision of care arrangements for children who are infected with COVID-19, and who may have reduced access to staff due to illness or vaccination hesitancy.

I would remind you of the resources available to support your planning on the [department's website](#), including messages from the Director-General.

I would also recommend you review the materials provided on the websites of the human services peak bodies including [PeakCare](#) and the [Community Services Industry Alliance](#).

The department will continue to liaise with industry peaks on a regular basis through the coming months to monitor impacts on the child and family sector and to consider information needs for service providers. We will provide further updates as the situation evolves.

If you have concerns about how COVID-19 may impact your organisation or your clients, please contact your contract manager. For organisations delivering services to children in care, directly or indirectly, please seek medical advice as appropriate if you become aware a child or an associated household member is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms and contact your CSO or Child Safety After Hours, as soon as possible.

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](#).

Kind regards

Barbara Shaw | Senior Executive Director
Investment and Commissioning | Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs