

AVENUE II COVID-19 PANDEMIC PLANNING MANUAL

TOPIC: Pandemic Planning Protocols	SUBJECT: COVID-19 Vaccination	Code: PPP010
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COVID-19 VACCINATION

PURPOSE:

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant morbidity and mortality. Clients supported with certain pre-existing medical conditions are at a higher risk for more severe symptoms after contracting COVID-19. The purpose of this directive is to reduce the risk of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace by providing occupational protection to all staff and thereby preventing exposure to the people we support.

The vaccines currently approved in Canada have been shown to be safe and effective against COVID-19. Avenue II strongly encourages all Employees and Visitors to receive the COVID-19 vaccination and **expects Employees, students and Essential Visitors who provide direct support or work in an area where direct support is provided to be vaccinated against COVID-19.**

This policy has been developed in consultation with Avenue II's JHSC as a reasonable and necessary measure to prevent, respond to, and alleviate the outbreak of COVID-19 and the associated risk to clients, many of whom are medically fragile and/or cannot comply with social distancing and infectious disease transmission prevention protocols.

This policy also reflects our obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) to take every reasonable precaution in the circumstances to protect a worker and to comply with our obligation under applicable emergency orders (O. Reg 177/20 and O. Reg. 121/20) and current Public Health advice/recommendations.

The policy is based on the significant risk factors for COVID-19 infection that are present in Avenue II workplaces given the nature of support and as described in Ontario's Response Framework including close contact, closed spaces, crowded places, forceful exhalation, and prolonged exposure, with the most serious risk factor being close contact.

POLICY:

This policy will set out the COVID-19 Vaccination requirements for all employees, students, and Essential Visitors who:

- Intend to be or have been vaccinated:
- Cannot be vaccinated due to substantiated medical or religious reasons protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code; or
- Choose not to be vaccinated for other reasons.

Employees are encouraged to book vaccination appointments outside of working hours. However, if it is during working hours, time off with pay will be granted. Those not working at the time, will not receive compensation for attending on their own time.

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Employees will provide a record of full vaccination against COVID-19 to Human Resources in order to comply with this policy and its requirements. Failure to provide proof will result in the employee being noted as not having received the vaccine.

DEFINITIONS

Employee – Avenue II employees. This includes Employees currently employed by Avenue II or at the time this policy comes into effect. Those who are hired after that date will be referred to as **Prospective Employees**.

Essential Visitors – includes third-party contractors, healthcare providers, and other visitors with a specific purpose for the clients or their environment (e.g., cleaning, maintenance).

Fully Vaccinated – greater than or equal to 14 days after receiving the second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine. Proof of vaccination is required.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy and Employee COVID-19 Vaccination Declaration Form is effective September 23, 2021.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Expectation of Vaccination

- Avenue II expects all Employees and Essential Visitors who provide support or work in an area where clients are supported to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as per Ministry of Health standards. This is necessary given the extreme risk associated with COVID-19 and is designed to keep all Employees and clients safe and healthy.
- During the recruitment process, Prospective Employees will be informed that anyone applying to be an Employee will be asked to show acceptable proof of vaccination against COVID-19 as a condition for hire.
- Existing Employees must submit a copy of their Ministry of Health vaccination record to Human Resources.
- Essential Visitors who provide direct support or work in an area where direct support is provided will be asked to attest to being fully vaccinated. As part of the Active Screening, Essential Visitors will be asked if they have been vaccinated prior to entry to any Avenue II work location.
- Any costs associated with proof of immunization are the responsibility of the Employee or Essential Visitor.

ACCOMMODATION:

Avenue II will provide accommodation up to the point of undue hardship to the organization to any Employee or Essential Visitor who is unable to be vaccinated for substantiated medical or religious reasons.

Written proof of a medical reason, provided by a physician or registered nurse in the extended class that sets out: (i) a documented reason for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and (ii) the effective time-period for the

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medical reason. Written proof of religious reasons must include supporting documentation from your religious leader and have the Religious declaration form that has been signed by a commissioner for taking affidavits in Ontario. Any fee for this will be at the expense of the Employee.

Staff who are accommodated will submit to regular rapid antigen testing and demonstrate a negative result at intervals to be determined by Avenue II which must be at minimum once every seven days. Staff will attend testing on their own time. Information on where to get tested will be provided to the qualifying individual. If the Employee chooses to attend another location Avenue II will only reimburse up to \$40.00 per test when proof of payment is provided. Enhanced screening and additional precautionary measures will also be in effect.

The Ministry of Health Resource Guide indicates there are likely to be very few medical exemptions to COVID-19 vaccination with the largest group of individuals having severe allergic reactions or anaphylaxis to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or any of its components and who have been assessed by an allergist/immunologist to review methods for possible (re)administration of a COVID-19 vaccine.

To determine whether accommodation is required and/or possible without undue hardship, Avenue II will assess the risk to staff and clients, nature of the work, the location/environment where the work is performed, and the current community risk associated with the transmission of COVID-19 based on the information provided and present. The accommodation will be dependent on both internal and external factors.

Avenue II will reimburse up to \$50 for any documentation that substantiates a need for medical accommodation provided there is a receipt submitted for reimbursement.

Due to the seriousness of COVID-19 and its impact on the health and safety of Avenue II work environments, limited operations due to the pandemic and the clients, accommodation may not be possible in all circumstances.

Any employee who is not vaccinated must complete the Employee COVID-19 Vaccination Declaration Form and return it to Human Resources with the required supporting documentation on or before September 23, 2021.

Failure to complete the Employee COVID-19 Vaccination Declaration Form will result in the Employee being considered "unvaccinated" and subject to enhanced screening and additional precautionary measure including, but not limited to:

- Wearing enhanced PPE (facial protection) at all times;
- Be subject to Rapid Antigen Testing beginning October 1, 2021 at the latest and show proof of a negative COVID-19 test result as required;
- Prohibited from providing direct support to a person who is symptomatic and probable or confirmed to have COVID-19 until their isolation period is complete;
- Prevented from working in a location that is experiencing an outbreak until the outbreak is declared over by Public Health.
- Working at only one employer as directed by MCCSS.

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Unvaccinated employees may be restricted from working in high-risk environments, and/or limited to working in one location and/or one employer for the duration of the Pandemic. This could result in the employee being placed on an unpaid leave of absence.

High-risk environments include situations in where there is:

- A risk of exposure to other unvaccinated people and/or inability to maintain physical distance;
- Close prolonged contact, areas with poor ventilation, and/or inability to maintain physical distance;
- Any area currently experiencing an outbreak.
- A direction from the Ontario Government, MCCSS and/or Public Health or the equivalent.

Employees

If Employees do not receive the COVID-19 vaccination for reasons unrelated to medical or religious as stated above the response will be determined with reference to each circumstance. Considerations will include but are not limited to:

- recommendations by Public Health, service agreements or contractual obligations with partnering entities,
- relevant legislation and province directives,
- current community risk,
- the employment contract,
- the collective agreement,
- the type of work performed (whether it is direct support, work in a congregate care setting, individualized support, administration/office work),

Employees who do not meet the criteria of fully vaccinated for COVID-19 or written proof of medical or religious reasons may not have available work and may be placed on temporary, unpaid leave of absence during this time. Unvaccinated employees may be permitted to use any unused vacation, floats and lieu.

Prospective Employees will provide proof of acceptable level vaccination and/or consideration for accommodation as a consideration for employment. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of the offer.

TESTING

Testing kits will be offered by Avenue II at no cost and on the person's own time. While available should they not use the testing offered by Avenue II they will provide at their own cost a Rapid Antigen or PCR test to substantiate a negative COVID-19 test.

Should the employee fail to provide required documentation the required times per week or refuse regular testing the employee will be placed on unpaid leave.

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Other COVID-19 Protective Measures:

All Avenue II policies with respect to COVID-19 protective measures continue to apply to all vaccinated and unvaccinated employees. Vaccinations do not replace PPE, handwashing, cough hygiene and social distancing. PPE and all COVID-19 precautions continue to be in effect unless otherwise directed.

Review of Policy

This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect any changes in the degree of risk and any advice or recommendations from public health authorities and directives or legislation.

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AVENUE II EMPLOYEE COVID-19 VACCINATION DECLARATION FORM FOR EXISTING EMPLOYEES

All employees who provide direct support or work in an environment where individuals are supported are expected to be immunized against infectious diseases of public significance including COVID-19.

This Employee COVID-19 Vaccination Declaration Form must be completed and submitted as soon as possible to Human Resources along with substantiated proof/documentation if necessary.

Supporting documentation must provide details about the nature of the disability and/or the religious belief which limits or restricts you from being vaccinated and is to be submitted along with this form to Human Resources. Religious documentation must include a Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief shall be completed by the Employee and shall be signed by a commissioner for taking affidavits in Ontario. This information is needed so that Avenue II can determine whether it is possible, in the circumstances, to provide an accommodation.

Depending on the information provided additional supporting evidence may be requested. Examples of who may provide attestation includes Primary healthcare provider, clergy or religious leader.

Failure to complete this Form will result in the employee being considered “unvaccinated” in accordance with Avenue II’s COVID-19 Vaccination policy and subject to the accommodation provisions therein.

Unvaccinated employees will be subject to enhanced screening and additional precautionary measures including, but not limited to:

- wearing enhanced PPE (facial protection) at all times;
- be subject to Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) or PCR if RAT is not available beginning September 23 , 2021 at the latest and show proof of a negative COVID-19 test result at a minimum two times per week dependent on schedule;
- prohibited from providing direct support to a person who is symptomatic and probable or confirmed to have COVID-19 until their isolation period is complete;
- prevented from working in a location that is experiencing an outbreak until the outbreak is declared over by Public Health.
- limited to working in one location or cluster within Avenue II and/or one employer within the Developmental Services Sector for the duration of the Pandemic.
- restricted from working in high-risk environments.

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VACCINATION STATUS

Name of Employee: _____

- I have received/intend to receive on _____ [insert date of appointment] the COVID-19 vaccine and will provide a copy of my vaccination record to Human Resources within one (1) week after receiving the vaccine.
- I decline to receive the COVID-19 vaccine for medical reasons. Note: Supporting documentation from your treating physician establishing your medical restriction must be submitted with this form. Written proof of a medical reason, provided by a physician or registered nurse in the extended class that sets out: (i) a documented reason for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and (ii) the effective time-period for the medical reason.
- I decline to receive the COVID-19 vaccine for religious reasons: Note: Supporting documentation from your religious leader must accompany this form in addition to a Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief signed by a commissioner for taking affidavits in Ontario.
- I decline to receive the COVID-19 vaccine for personal reasons.

Note: All employees who choose not to be vaccinated for personal or religious reasons must complete an educational package that includes information about the benefits of vaccination and the risks of not being vaccinated.

I confirm that:

- I have read the Avenue II Vaccination Policy PPP010
- I have spoken with my Manager about my immunization status
- I have had the opportunity to seek clarification regarding this policy and my concerns; and
- I have received information about COVID-19 vaccines prior to completing this form.

Signature : _____

Date Signed: _____