

Having a conversation with your support workers about mandatory worker vaccinations

This fact sheet has information for people with disability and their families about having a conversation with your support workers about mandatory worker COVID-19 vaccination.

Mandatory worker vaccination means the Queensland Government has brought in a rule that all disability support workers must be fully vaccinated by 15 December 2021. Mandatory worker vaccination is also called a Public Health Direction or Direction.

Being fully vaccinated means disability support workers must have two injections to protect themselves from COVID-19 by 15 December 2021.

Disability support workers who do not do this by 15 December 2021 cannot keep providing disability services after this date.

Because it is the responsibility of workers to be fully vaccinated, it is reasonable for you to check that they are.

Disability workers are people who are providing face to face services to people with disability, including volunteers, students, and people providing services funded by schemes such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Queensland Community Support Scheme (QCSS), or My Aged Care.

Disability workers can also include:

- people employed through a disability service to provide you with assistance with daily life tasks
- people who volunteer or work unpaid through a disability service or provider
- students on placement with a disability service or provider as part of a university or TAFE course
- self-employed workers or sole traders who work under an ABN (Australian Business Number) to provide you with assistance with daily life tasks, such as:
 - people who help you to get dressed
 - shower
 - eat and or prepare food
 - go out shopping
 - assist to pay your bills

- assist you to visit your family or friends or
- go to a café or the movies.
- people who provide other services to you paid for with your NDIS funding. For example:
 - people who mow your lawn
 - people who clean your house
 - people who provide other services like podiatry and physiotherapy.

If a worker refuses to provide proof of vaccination, you can choose not to be supported by them.

If you receive a service that is not face to face, such as online or on Zoom, the worker does not have to be vaccinated.



If I am self-managing or plan managing – what do I do?

If you are self-managing or plan managing your NDIS supports, you need to talk to the people you engage to provide your supports to:

- ask them about their vaccination status and
- see proof of this.

This includes anyone you engage to do:

- activities of daily living including support in your home and in the community
- other activities in and around your home such as lawn mowing and house cleaning.

You are not required to show this evidence to anyone, but it is a good idea to keep a secure record of the type of proof they showed you and the date.

You are only legally responsible for ensuring people who support you are vaccinated if you are their direct employer.



Having a conversation with your support worker

This Direction has been brought in to make sure people with disability are as safe as possible, and can be confident there is a reduced risk of workers passing on COVID-19.

Before you have a conversation with your support worker:

- get all the information about vaccination and the new government direction together – you can use this fact sheet
- write down any questions you have for your support workers
- if you are concerned about raising vaccination status, talk through what you want to say with a trusted family member, friend, or advocate about the key messages you want to talk about with your support worker
- know where to go to for further information if you need it.

Conversations about a person's vaccination status can be uncomfortable and emotional. If you are feeling uncomfortable about having the conversation with your worker, you can:

- talk to the disability service in the first case rather than raising it with your worker
- ask a support person or a family member to be with you to have a conversation with the worker and/or the disability service.

If you are feeling uncomfortable about the way the conversation is going with your worker, you can say you want to stop the conversation now. You can take some more time to think things through, get more information, or talk to a trusted person.



Proof of vaccination

There are different types of proof available that workers can show you:

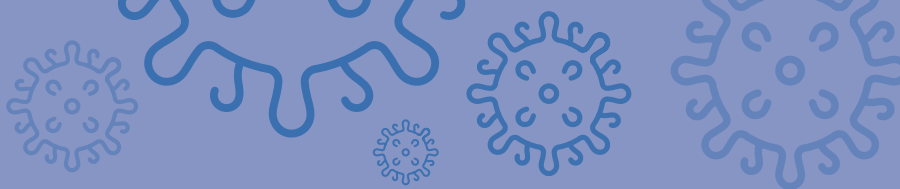
- a COVID-19 digital certificate (available on MyGov Medicare account)
- digital vaccination certificate added on the Qld Check In app
- copy of immunisation history statement from Australian Immunisation Register
- international COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate

There is more information available [here](#)

Fake vaccination certificate

Because proof of vaccination can be shown in different ways, it can be difficult to know if you are being shown legitimate proof. You do not need to check that your worker's vaccination certificate is real, and you won't get into trouble if it is a fake.

Workers can be fined or even go to jail for working with a fake COVID-19 vaccination certificate.



If I am supported by an organisation – what will they do?

If you are supported by a disability service, they will have the conversation and work with your disability support workers to make sure they are fully vaccinated.

Disability services will have contacted all of their employees by email or written letter or phone call to ask for proof of the worker's vaccination status before 15 December 2021.

Workers need to provide this proof to their employer before **15 December 2021** when the Government Health Directive takes effect to be able to continue to be employed as disability support workers.

Disability services need to keep a secure record of the vaccination statuses of all their employees. This means information about workers' vaccinations are kept confidential and in locked filing cabinets or computers that have passwords.

Employees who have provided proof they have a medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccinations can keep working after 15 December 2021 if they:

- use masks or personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves and follow the PPE guidelines [here](#) and COVID safe plans and
- get a COVID-19 PCR test each day they work and stop work immediately if they receive a positive test result.

Please note the responsibility is on the worker to provide evidence of vaccination to their employer, **not** the person with disability or the family member.

In some cases where the worker cannot give a valid reason for not being vaccinated there may be a need for the support service to hire other workers to support you.



What if there is a shortage of disability support workers?

Disability services and employers may experience critical workforce shortages due to the Direction.

If this happens, the person in charge of the service can assess the risk to:

- people with disability
- staff
- other people in the setting

and decide that it is necessary for unvaccinated workers to continue for a short period (limited to three months) until the workforce shortage can be fixed. Only the Chief Health Officer or delegate can approve an unvaccinated worker to continue working beyond the three month period.

Disability support workers in this situation must follow these rules to reduce the risk of passing on COVID-19:

- use masks or PPE and follow the PPE guidelines [here](#) and COVID safe plans and
- get a COVID-19 PCR test each day they work and stop work immediately if they receive a positive test result.



What if I only want unvaccinated workers?

This would be a breach of the rule and is not allowed. Both disability services and workers can be fined by Queensland Health under the direction – most importantly though it is a risk to both your health and your worker.



Things to remember for all people with disability

You have a right to ask questions and make informed choices about the services you are provided.

You can ask your worker to provide you proof of their vaccination.

If a worker refuses to provide proof of vaccination, you can choose not to be supported by them.

If you receive a service that is not face to face, such as by telephone, online or on Zoom, the worker does not have to be vaccinated.

You can contact the Disability Gateway on 1800 643 878 or [here](#) or the Carer Gateway on 1800 422 737 or [here](#) for more information on COVID-19 and vaccinations, and they may also be able to talk to you about options and supports.

The Government Health Direction or rule is called **Workers in a healthcare setting (COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements) Direction** and you can see it [here](#)