

Health and safety risk assessments

With the removal of the vaccine mandate for education, all services need to revisit their work health and safety risk assessment.

The risk assessment will enable services to determine what protections are appropriate for your centre, including employer vaccination requirements or other measures.

When completing or reviewing a risk assessment, there are a few points to remember:

- you must complete it with employees and their representatives in good faith.
- the focus of your assessment must be on the work being done, not the individual who does the work.
- you must consult your community of parents.

It is important to take the time to do the assessment properly and consult with both staff and your parent community.

The risk assessment needs to be done for each service and each role eg. kaiako, relievers, office administrator, van driver, cook, cleaner, parent help.

If you have multiple centres and staff work across them, you will need to combine the information from multiple assessments.

Step 1 – Assess the level of risk of staff or children contracting COVID-19 at your service

The public health justification for requiring vaccination is stronger when the risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 at work is higher than it is in the community.

There are several public health factors that you should consider to help determine whether the risk in the workplace is higher than that in the community.

For a particular role:

- Does the worker regularly, as part of their work, interact with people who are at greater risk of severe illness should they contract COVID-19?
- Does the worker regularly interact with people who are less likely to be vaccinated against COVID-19?
- Does the worker work in a confined indoor space (of less than 100m²) and involve close and sustained interactions with others (i.e. closer than 1m distance, for periods of more than 15 continuous minutes)?

People are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 if they:

- are older (over the age of 70)
- have an underlying medical condition
- are an infant under the age of 1 month
- are a child under the age of 2 who was born premature (less than 37 weeks)
- are a child with multiple chronic conditions
- are pregnant or have recently given birth.

Lists of underlying medical and chronic conditions are on the MOH website here

<https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-higher-risk-people#medical>

Step 2 – Determine the risk level of your parent community

What is the level of vaccination?

- The Unite Against COVID-19 website has a map showing vaccination rates around New Zealand. [Map of COVID-19 vaccination rates in New Zealand - COVID-19 website](#)
- This data is also published in spreadsheet form by the Ministry of Health each week. Open the first spreadsheet “COVID-19 vaccination data through xx xxx 2022”. To see vaccination rates by suburb go to the tab ‘SA2 All Ethnicities’ or ‘SA2 Māori and Pacific Peoples’.
[COVID-19: Vaccine data | Ministry of Health NZ](#)
- While a 2-dose vaccination course provides some protection against Omicron, a booster vaccine after a primary course helps boost people’s immunity against COVID-19. Currently boosters are not required (to be considered fully vaccinated) for a My Vaccine Pass.

Does your community have a high proportion of people who are at higher risk from COVID-19 such as having an underlying health condition?

Lists of underlying medical and chronic conditions are on the MOH website here

<https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-higher-risk-people#medical>

Do your families include those with babies in the high risk categories above?

You will need to involve your community to answer these questions. Tell your community that you are doing a risk assessment to determine what staff need to be vaccinated and that you need specific information from them.

Step 3 – Assess the information gathered

Remember, the information is valid at a point in time, for the current staff, tamariki and community.

Step 4 – Decide on the requirements for each role

In deciding what controls to implement, you will need to consider what is reasonably practicable. You should first consider the controls that are least intrusive to employees. Examples of a control that should be considered before requiring vaccination are:

- workers staying at home when sick,
- improving ventilation in the workplace,
- regular testing,
- wearing masks and
- following basic hygiene practices.

Your requirements may differ by role. For example, kaiako need to be vaccinated, the van driver needs to be vaccinated, the cook doesn’t but will provide a negative RAT test each week, the administrator doesn’t need to be vaccinated, volunteer parents will wear masks.

The risk assessment needs to be reviewed based on your changing risk profile, eg immune compromised children leaving for school, at risk teacher left etc.

Step 5 – Share and explain your risk assessment and decisions with staff and your community

Share your decisions with staff, then get agreement from your governing body, then share with your community.

What about WorkSafe?

WorkSafe's expectation is that an employer:

- follows public health guidance when carrying out a risk assessment
- engages effectively with workers and their representatives
- regularly reviews the risk assessment as the situation changes.

Where an employer can demonstrate it has done this, it is very unlikely that WorkSafe will take enforcement action, even if they disagree with the decisions an employer has made in their risk assessment.

