



COVID-19 Vaccination Policy of the Diocese of Hamilton

Above all, clothe yourselves in love

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The Diocese of Hamilton (Diocese) is committed to taking every reasonable precaution in the protection of the health and safety of individuals from the hazard of COVID-19. According to public health guidance, vaccination is a key element in the protection against COVID-19. This Policy is designed to maximize protection among clergy (Bishops, Priests and Deacons) who serve in the Diocese, Diocese Employees, Independent Contractors, Volunteers, Parishioners and visitors.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all clergy who serve in the Diocese, which includes all bishops, priests and deacons (Clergy); lay managers and employees (Staff), independent contractors; and volunteers. Collectively they are referred to under this Policy as “Employees”.

TEMPORARY DURATION OF POLICY

This Policy is in effect as of September 22nd, 2021 until further notice. This Policy is intended to be an interim policy of the Diocese and therefore the Policy is subject to change according to public health guidance, government regulations and legislation, as determined in the sole discretion of the Diocese.

VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS

The Diocese does not require Employees to be vaccinated. Given the continuing spread of COVID-19 with new variants, and following public health guidance in Ontario and federally, full vaccination is strongly recommended for all Employees in order to maintain a safe and healthy workplace. Full vaccination means receiving all recommended doses within the recommended time period of an approved Health Canada COVID-19 vaccine, including the 14-day period following the second or last dose (Full Vaccination).

Employees are encouraged to be fully vaccinated in order to protect themselves against serious illness from COVID-19, as well as to provide indirect protection to others, including parishioners and visitors at all Diocesan locations, which includes churches, parish or chancery offices, and cemeteries (Diocesan Locations). Employees who cannot or choose not to receive Full Vaccination will be subject to the terms of this Policy for unvaccinated individuals until they have received their Full Vaccination. (Including the 14-day period after their second or last dose).

CONTINUED COMPLIANCE WITH ALL HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

The Diocese has and will continue to comply with all guidance directives, regulations and laws of the Provincial Government of Ontario, Federal Government and local Public Health Units in regard to COVID-19. Unless a legislated or regulatory exemption applies, all Employees are expected and required to continue to comply with all applicable health and safety measures to reduce the hazard of COVID-19, including but not limited to screening, wearing a mask or face covering, using provided personal protective equipment (PPE), maintaining appropriate physical distancing, and self-monitoring of potential COVID-19 symptoms when at work or otherwise engaged in work or volunteer activities at Diocesan Locations or at Diocesan events wherever they may be held.

Clergy and Staff who remain unvaccinated, including those who are exempt due to a medical exemption under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (“Code”), will be required to take additional infection and prevention control measures, including providing ongoing proof of negative COVID-19 tests as stated below.

SUPPORT FOR VACCINATIONS

The Diocese will support Employees in receiving their Full Vaccination by October 31st, 2021. Reasonable arrangements will be made to allow for Clergy and Staff to attend COVID-19 vaccination clinics during work time, without loss of compensation or the requirement to use sick time or vacation time. The maximum paid time allowed is three (3) hours.

Staff must have approval from their Managers in advance before attending a vaccination clinic during work time. All efforts should be made to allow Staff to use time at the beginning or end of their work day or to extend lunch and break times to attend vaccination clinics.

Where Staff are unable to attend a vaccination clinic during their regularly scheduled work hours, the Diocese will compensate them for a period of 30 minutes outside of work time to receive a vaccination.

Staff can take one full day off immediately after their first and/or second vaccination, if there are lingering side effects of the vaccination.

PROOF OF VACCINATION

The Diocese requires to know the vaccination status of all Employees. Proof means documentation verifying receipt of a vaccination series approved by Health Canada, the World Health Organization or verification using an Ontario vaccine passport (QR code) where available.

Employees must disclose their vaccination status to the Diocese. Staff, independent contractors and volunteers shall provide documentation to the Human Resources Manager at the Diocese (Ms. Gagan Gill) no later than October 31st, 2021. Clergy shall provide documentation to the Diocesan Chancellor (Monsignor Murray Kroetsch) no later than October 31st, 2021. Employees who, by October 31st, 2021, disclose that they have not received Full Vaccination or who have not disclosed their vaccination status as required, shall be subject to the terms of this Policy for unvaccinated individuals. If Employees subsequently provide proof that they have received Full Vaccination, then they will be deemed in compliance with this Policy for Full Vaccination.

PRIVACY

Vaccination status information as well as proof of valid exemptions to vaccination, will be collected, used and disclosed pursuant to the Diocesan Privacy Policy, the terms of this Policy, the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*, and other applicable privacy legislation. This information will only be used to the extent necessary for implementation of this Policy, for administering health and safety protocols, and infection and prevention control measures in the workplace. Confidential information will be stored securely and temporarily in the sole discretion of the Diocese and will not become part of a Covered Individual's permanent file.

VACCINATION EXEMPTIONS

Clergy and Staff who have a valid medical exemption, including an exemption based on an illness or disability, will be accommodated in accordance with the Code. A valid medical exemption must be provided in the form of a written document supplied by a qualified medical doctor, nurse practitioner, or registered nurse (Extended Class) setting out a documented medical reason for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and, if applicable, the effective time-period for the medical reason. The Diocese reserves the right to request further information before accepting a valid medical exemption.

For those Clergy who have a valid medical exemption or Staff who have valid medical or religious exemptions under the Code, if there is no ability to accommodate such individuals in accordance with the Code which allows for the continued performance of their duties, then a paid or an unpaid leave of absence, or other measures as deemed appropriate, may be provided at the discretion of the Bishop of Hamilton.

There is no requirement that the Diocese accommodate Clergy or Staff who do not have a valid medical or religious reason under the Code not to be vaccinated. There is also no requirement to accommodate independent contractors or volunteers pursuant to this Policy. However, the Bishop of Hamilton may, at his sole discretion, agree to vaccination exemptions to independent contractors for medical or religious reasons. Should the Bishop of Hamilton permit a vaccination exemption to an independent contractor, that person shall be subject to the additional measures as contained in this Policy.

RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION

There are no religious exemptions under this Policy for those who are Roman Catholics. Religious exemptions for non-Roman Catholic Staff will be considered individually. The Diocese reserves the right to request further information in support of a religious exemption, as it deems appropriate.

ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

Clergy and Staff who are not able to receive a COVID-19 vaccine for a reason related to a protected ground as set out in the Code, can request accommodation by contacting the Chancellor at the Diocese Chancery Office.

Clergy and Staff with a valid exemption under the Code, or who choose not to receive Full Vaccination without an exemption, must provide proof at their own expense of a negative rapid COVID-19 test every Monday and Thursday morning, except if such Clergy or Staff are on vacation or are on sick leave that day, in which case proof shall be provided on the day that the Clergy or Staff return to work. Staff shall provide negative test results to their respective managers at the beginning of their work day. Clergy shall provide negative test results to the

Diocesan Chancellor. Only those with a valid Code exemption will be considered for requests to cover costs of COVID-19 tests.

The Clergy and Staff who receives a positive rapid test must follow up with a PCR Covid 19 test to validate the rapid test.

Those who choose not to receive Full Vaccination without a valid exemption, are required to attend mandatory education sessions on the benefits of vaccination as arranged by the Diocese.

FAILURE TO PERFORM ESSENTIAL WORK BY STAFF DUE TO VACCINATION STATUS

Although the Diocese will attempt to reasonably accommodate Staff with a valid exemption under the Human Rights Code (Code), the Diocese may not be able to provide alternative work arrangements or find additional duties for Staff to maintain their previous hours. In some circumstances, an unvaccinated Staff member may not be able to access the workplace and/or there may be less or no work available to them. If an unvaccinated Staff member is unable to perform their duties, the Diocese maintains the right to effectively manage the workplace.

Effectively managing the workplace may include:

- Revising or reducing duties and/or work hours and total compensation accordingly.
- Temporary suspension from duties.
- Leave of absences or lay-offs.
- Disciplinary measures.
- Termination. Please note that termination will only be considered after a careful review of all potential reasonable accommodation options.

There is no right to reinstatement for any Employee who has been dismissed or relieved from their duties for non-compliance with this Policy. Any reinstatement or resumption of duties will be at the sole discretion of the Bishop of Hamilton.

UNVACCINATED VOLUNTEERS AND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

Diocesan volunteers and independent contractors who cannot or choose not to receive Full Vaccination under this Policy will have their services suspended for the duration of this Policy or until such time that such individual has received their Full Vaccination (including the 14-day period after their second or last dose). The Diocese appreciates all volunteers and may or may not request that such volunteers resume their services after this Policy expires.

UNVACCINATED CLERGY

To protect our parishioners, visitors and the public, the Diocese considers that Clergy who have not received Full Vaccination may be unable to properly and safely carry out certain ministries, due to restrictions from other institutions (Hospitals, School Boards, etc.) including, but not limited to the following:

- Hospital visits.
- Nursing home and long term care visits.
- School visits.

Please note that the Bereavement Association of Ontario is currently reviewing their policy in regards to funeral home and mausoleum services.

INTERPRETATION OF POLICY

The terms of this Policy are, at all times, subject to interpretation by the Bishop of Hamilton at his sole and absolute discretion.

ONGOING MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF COVID-19 WORKPLACE SAFETY MEASURES

The Diocese will continue to closely monitor its COVID-19 risk mitigation strategy and the evolving public health information. If it is determined that additional precautions are necessary, the Diocese will amend this Policy accordingly.

Any questions concerning the interpretation and/or applicability of this Policy should be addressed to Monsignor Murray Kroetsch or Mr. Jim Long.