

COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

Intent

In our baptismal covenant, we promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbour as ourselves, and respecting the dignity of every human being. Those in positions of leadership and service to the vulnerable have a heightened moral obligation and duty of care to protect others, and to set an example to the communities we serve. One crucial way we can fulfill this sacred responsibility is to be vaccinated against COVID-19, if we are able to do so.

COVID-19 is a highly infectious viral disease, transmitted primarily through respiratory droplets and aerosols. Consequences of COVID-19 infection can range from no or a few mild symptoms, to severe and long-term effects, to death. It is imperative that our society and world realize high immunization rates to limit the spread of COVID-19 to those most vulnerable, and minimize the possibility of the emergence of new and potentially more severe variants.

The preponderance of evidence indicates that vaccination against COVID-19 reduces the number of new cases and severe outcomes, including hospitalizations and death due to the virus. Accordingly, the Archbishop of Algoma enacts this policy to better ensure the protection and safety of our parishioners, clergy, employees, and all those we serve in the name of our Lord by reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in our church buildings and other ministry settings. This policy is intended to comply with all applicable laws, and is responsive to the guidance of our health advisors, and provincial and regional regulations, as applicable.

Access to Policy and Program

The policy shall be posted on the Diocesan website. It will be distributed by email to diocesan clergy and Synod Office staff. It is the responsibility of Synod Office staff to forward this policy to those groups for whom they offer staff support. It is the responsibility of Incumbents to forward this policy to wardens, and people in other ministry positions to whom it does or may apply. It is the responsibility of Regional Deans to ensure this policy is distributed to deanery officials and other deanery level staff or volunteers. Parish officials (Incumbent and wardens) are expected to ensure all parish employees, volunteers, and parishioners are made aware of the policy, and to also post this policy in a public place so all members of the parish community are aware of the policy.

Applicability

Those functioning in ministry roles have been entrusted with responsibilities that include protection of the vulnerable. As such, the following people will be required to be immunized with two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine approved by Health Canada, plus any boosters as applicable, unless legally exempt, to serve in the Diocese of Algoma during this pandemic:

- all clergy holding a Bishop's license or permission;
- all licensed lay workers;
- all diocesan staff;
- deanery officials;
- wardens and deputy wardens;
- Synod Delegates and Alternate Delegates;
- all parochial staff;

- all liturgical leaders eligible for vaccination, including, but not limited to:
 - musicians and vocalists;
 - lay readers;
 - readers/lectors, intercessors, servers, and communion assistants;
 - greeters, ushers, and sidespeople;
- all providing in person “one-on-one” pastoral care, such as pastoral visitors and spiritual directors;
- all people ministering with children, youth, and young adults; and
- all people ministering with marginalized or vulnerable populations, including in food security and other outreach ministries.

This is applicable to all locations, whether indoors or outdoors, where work, ministry, or volunteer engagements are carried out in person on behalf of the Diocese, deaneries, parishes, and/or ministries of the Diocese.

People in the roles set out above will be required to be fully immunized with a COVID-19 vaccine approved by Health Canada, unless legally exempt, to serve in the Diocese of Algoma during this pandemic. To continue serving in these roles, persons designated above must have received their first dose of vaccine by November 8, 2021 and the second no later than December 10, 2021. Vaccination status must also be kept current by obtaining booster doses as recommended by public health authorities.

All members of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Algoma are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated out of care for the vulnerable among us. Likewise, all participating in worship or other ministries of the church are required to observe all COVID-19 protocols, including the wearing of masks and physical distancing.

Policy Requirements for Clergy, Non-ordained Incumbents, & Diocesan Staff

Proof of vaccination must be submitted via email to the Diocesan Archdeacon (congdevelopment@dioceseofalgoma.com) Alternatively, arrangements can be made to share a copy of the vaccine confirmation via *Zoom*. Confirmation information (name and date of second/full vaccination) will be maintained, protected and stored securely in the Synod Office and destroyed when no longer needed. This will not become part of an individual’s permanent clergy or employment file. Supervisors, coworkers, and other parties shall not have access to the vaccine confirmation information or the details of the same, except to the extent necessary to implement this policy or as may be required by law.

Policy Requirements for Parish and Deanery Ministry Ministers

Each parish will maintain a record of the laypersons in parish/congregation roles with an indication they have provided proof of vaccination. A trusted person is to be assigned to visually check each person’s vaccination confirmation and record the name of each person and the date of their second/full vaccination. Confirmation information will be stored securely and destroyed when no longer needed. Individuals providing proof of vaccination are presumed, by the act of providing the proof, to be consenting to the Diocese having this information. Wardens and Incumbent are responsible to ensure that the requirements of this policy are met in their church or churches.

For those serving in deanery positions, the Territorial Archdeacon or a trusted person designated by the Archdeacon shall visually check such a person’s vaccination confirmation

and record the name of that person and the date of their second/full vaccination. This information must be forwarded via email to the Diocesan Archdeacon (congdevelopment@dioceseofalgoma.com). Confirmation information (name and date of second/full vaccination) will be maintained, protected and stored securely in the Synod Office and destroyed when no longer needed.

Exemptions Under the Ontario Human Rights Code¹

Anyone, to whom this policy applies, be they clergy, lay worker, staff, parish, or regional minister, who qualifies for a valid legal exemption from vaccination under the Ontario Human Rights Code (the “Code”) shall provide valid documentation of the same to the Diocesan Archdeacon.

Those with a validly documented exemption will be required to take additional safety measures, including regularly providing proof of a negative COVID-19 test prior to in-person activities, at a frequency determined appropriate given the role they fulfill.

All persons requiring accommodation under the Code, whether it be in vaccination or testing, shall be provided with such accommodation up to the point of undue hardship. The Archbishop or Diocesan Archdeacon will engage with a person entitled to an exemption for Code-related grounds under this section in a co-operative process to determine if reasonable accommodation is possible, including alternative ways a person might continue to safely work or minister. This will consist of an individual assessment based on the specific facts regarding the employee or volunteer’s duties, the parish’s or Diocese’s needs, and the duty to accommodate. While there will always be an effort to provide reasonable and dignified accommodation, there may be situations where an individual cannot be accommodated short of undue hardship.

On Granting Exemptions for Religious Reasons

For those who may seek an exemption from vaccination for religious factors, there is neither legal nor doctrinal authority within The Anglican Church of Canada for any of its ministers to issue a religious vaccination exemption. Therefore, clergy are not permitted to provide letters of exemption to members of our Church who request a vaccination exemption on religious grounds.

No Harassment

The Diocese will not tolerate harassment on the basis of, or related to, vaccination status. All individuals are entitled to work in a manner that supports their dignity and affords them respect. Anyone who engages in harassment will be subject to consequences. For clergy and staff, this may include discipline up to and including dismissal or termination of appointment. For others, this may include suspension and/or termination of their role with the Diocese. Non-compliance officeholders and employees who do not provide the required proof of vaccination or evidence of valid Code-based exemption, or who fail/refuse to comply with testing requirement (or other measures implemented to address the risk of COVID-19) may be subject to disciplinary action, be restricted from attending certain locations/premises and/or be restricted from performing their duties. Those holding a

¹ For Algoma’s congregation and ministry exercised in Quebec, the appropriate Human Rights legislation rather than the Ontario Human Rights Code applies.

designated position on a volunteer basis may be required to refrain from the exercise of their ministry.

Additional Measures

All Diocesan protocols must be observed. Likewise, all directives of the Provincial Government and local public health authorities must be adhered to, including the following foundational pandemic guidance as long as they are required: minimizing the number of persons in a place at the same time, maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres, using well-constructed, well-fitting masks, practising good hand and respiratory hygiene, and staying home if feeling ill. In instances when Diocesan protocols and provincial or regional requirements differ, congregations are to follow the guidelines that provide the most protection.

Amendments

This policy is developed in accordance with current medical and scientific recommendations in an ever-changing landscape. Therefore, the Archbishop of Algoma may amend this policy as more information and best practices become known, or as conditions change.

For more information, please contact Archdeacon Jay Koyle at (705) 256.5061, ext. 22, or congdevelopment@dioceseofalgoma.com