

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES CIRCULAR

Date: February 11, 2022

CIRCULAR NUMBER: COVID-19 2022-09

To: Child and Family Services Authorities, agencies and group care providers

Subject: COVID-19 booster vaccine doses for youth in care aged 12-17

Type: Policy

Procedure

Effective Date: Immediately

Effective February 7, 2022, Manitoba youth ages 12 to 17 are eligible for a third dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine if they:

- have underlying medical conditions, which put them at increased risk
- belong to racialized or marginalized communities that are disproportionately affected by COVID-19
- live in shelters, group homes and correctional facilities

The third dose will be offered at least six months after the second dose.

As well, youth ages 12 to 17 who are immunocompromised and have received three doses are now eligible to receive a fourth dose.

Informed Consent

A vital component of any immunization program is an open and informed decision-making partnership between the immunization provider and the vaccine recipient or in the case of children, the parent/legal guardian. This includes providing information about the risks and benefits of immunization.

A COVID-19 Vaccine Consent Form

(https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/covid/covid19_consent_form.pdf) must be completed for all youth prior to immunization. To make the process flow smoothly, where possible, consent forms should be signed in advance of immunization appointments.

Young people aged 16 and 17 can review the [public health factsheet on mRNA Vaccines for Individuals Aged 12 Years and Older](#) and sign their own consent form.

It is ideal if youth aged 12 to 15 can either attend the appointment with a parent, guardian or caregiver or have their parent/legal guardian sign their consent form ahead of time to bring

along. Where a CFS agency is the youth's legal guardian (by court order or voluntary surrender of guardianship), the form may be signed by a CFS worker or other representative of the guardian CFS agency. For youth who are under a Voluntary Placement Agreement or apprehension, the CFS agency must have the COVID-19 Vaccine Consent Form completed by the parent/legal guardian unless it is anticipated that the child will be assessed by the immunizer to be a mature minor who can provide their own consent.

If a youth age 12 to 17 attends without a guardian and without a signed consent form, they can go through an informed consent process with a clinical lead to assess their ability to consent on their own and proceed with the vaccine. Where the child is considered a mature minor, consent from the child's parent/legal guardian is not required.

In the event that the consent of a youth, parent or (non-agency) guardian is required, and refused, the CFS agency may seek legal advice as to what options may be available for consideration (application to court in accordance with section 25(3) of The Child and Family Services Act, for example).

Immunization Appointments

Once a care provider has a signed consent form for a youth in care, the agency or direct care provider (such as foster parents or group care) can book an immunization appointment on behalf of the youth.

In addition to a completed, signed consent form, youth should bring their Manitoba Health Card to the vaccination site. In the absence of a Manitoba Health Card, they may bring their health card numbers or other piece of identification. If no identification is available, they will still be able to receive their vaccination. CFS guardian agencies are responsible for ensuring these documents are available and provided to whomever is taking the child to be vaccinated.

Service provider staff, foster parents or a support network member can accompany the youth in care to assist them at the vaccination site.

Documentation

Consents must be obtained in writing, and copies made for the CFS agency's files. Where a child in care receives a COVID-19 vaccination, the immunization window under the child well-being tab should be completed on CFSIS and the consent forms saved to the child in care file.

If consent for vaccination is refused by a youth assessed to be a mature minor, parent or guardian, a detailed note of both the consent discussion and the refusal should be made in the CFSIS child in care record. If a youth is fearful and not assessed to be a mature minor, the parent or guardian will share information and support vaccination.

If a mature minor or parent/legal guardian withdraws consent, this should be documented in the child in care CFSIS file. A detailed note on the consent withdrawal discussion should be recorded.

For more information on vaccines including appointment bookings, please see the Manitoba COVID-19 website at: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/index.html>.

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions – COVID-19 Immunizations of Children in Care of a Child and Family Services Agency, Aged 12-17

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COVID-19 Immunizations of Children/Youth in Care of a
Child and Family Services Agency, Aged 12-17

1. When and who gives consent on behalf of a youth who cannot consent for themselves?

Is the youth in the care of a CFS Agency due to an apprehension or a voluntary placement agreement?

- Where the CFS Agency is not the legal guardian of the youth, the youth's parent or legal guardian must provide the required consent. Manitoba's COVID-19 Vaccine Consent Form should be completed and the youth's parent or legal guardian must sign it.
- Where no parent or guardian is available (after reasonable efforts to locate them), the CFS agency may confirm that the vaccine is recommended by a duly qualified medical practitioner. If the vaccine is recommended, the CFS agency may consent on behalf of the child in care, in accordance with s. 25(1) of *The Child and Family Services Act*. It is recommended that the views and preferences of the child be considered by the CFS agency, where they can reasonably be ascertained.
- A parent's or guardian's refusal to consent is not the same as not being available and should be respected.
- Should a CFS agency want to challenge a refusal by a parent/guardian, it is recommended that the agency consult with legal counsel to determine what steps may be taken (application to court, for example).

Is the CFS agency the legal guardian of the youth pursuant to a guardianship order (permanent or temporary) or voluntary surrender of guardianship?

- As legal guardian of the child in care, the CFS agency must provide the completed Manitoba COVID-19 Vaccine Consent Form which can be signed by the CFS Guardian agency worker or representative.

2. Do the views of the youth have to be considered in making the immunization decision?

- As for all decisions made by CFS agencies in respect of their children in care, the best interests analysis requires the CFS agency to consider the views and preferences of the child where they can reasonably be ascertained.
- The CFS agency may, and is encouraged to, engage the child's family in this process, however it is not required unless the parent retains legal guardianship.

3. Can consent be withdrawn?

- At any time, a mature minor or child's parents/legal guardian can withdraw previous consent for a single vaccine or a series of vaccines.