

# COVID-19 Vaccinations in the Workplace

## Toolkit for BC Tourism & Hospitality Employers



Updated Feb 2022

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# Introduction

As BC continues to battle the 5<sup>th</sup> wave of the global pandemic, new issues surrounding vaccination status continue to arise. These complex issues can be quite challenging for employers to fully understand. Indeed, one of the most critical issue facing employers today is the vaccination status of staff. Currently there is no provincial mandate for mandatory vaccination of staff outside of the health care setting. It is up to the individual business to decide on their own policy.

While it is widely accepted that vaccination against COVID-19 is the most effective way of combating this virus, not everyone is vaccinated. Recent public health orders, notably, the provincial vaccination passport, will offer business a way to confirm the vaccination status of their customers, but questions about staff still linger.

How can an employer navigate this situation while balancing the legal and human rights issues mired in this issue?

Do employers need to have a vaccine policy in place? Can employers demand proof of vaccination from their employees? How can employers balance health and safety concerns with human rights or privacy ones? What do employers need to consider if they want to implement a vaccine policy?

This toolkit contains practical information, resources and downloadable tools to tourism and hospitality employers answer some of these difficult questions.

Should you have any questions or need additional guidance, please feel free to contact us: [HR@go2hr.ca](mailto:HR@go2hr.ca)

# FACTSHEET: COVID-19 Vaccinations – What Tourism & Hospitality Employers Need to Know

## UPDATE: COVID-19 Vaccinations - Where Are We Now?

- COVID-19 vaccinations continue to play a critical role in the prevention and spread of COVID-19 in Canada and world-wide.
  - BC continues to have one of the strongest vaccination rates across the country. As of Jan 25, 2022, 85% of BC residents have received at least 1 dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 79% have received two doses and are considered to be fully vaccinated (compared to 84% and 78% respectively for all of Canada). More information: [Canadian population overall](#)
- On Nov 19, 2021 BC approved the first vaccine for children ages 5-10. Parents can now register their children in this age range to receive their vaccination. More information: [COVID-19 vaccines for children 5 to 11](#)
- **Effective Jan 1, 2022**, workers in BC will be able to take up to **5 days of paid sick leave per year** for any personal illness or injury. More information: [Paid sick leave](#). This is in addition to the existing 3 days of unpaid sick leave that is already provided by the BC Employment Standards Act.
- Advancement and gradual easing of public health restrictions through the BC government's four-step [Restart](#) will only happen providing that the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths decline and the vaccination rate for people 18+ increases
- In recent months, BC and rest of Canadian provinces have started seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases due to the highly transmissible Omicron variant, which has given rise to a fifth wave of the pandemic.
- Recent weeks the World Health Order has raised concerns regarding the heavily mutated Omicron COVID-19 variant which has caused high risk of infection surges. Canada and other countries have implemented specific travel restrictions in efforts to slow the spread of this variant.
- COVID-19 cases among unvaccinated people are outnumbering those who are vaccinated. Health data is showing that unvaccinated individuals are 12x more likely to become infected and 34x more likely to end up in hospital, than individuals who are fully vaccinated
- Some [Provincial-Wide Restrictions](#) remain in place or have been reintroduced by the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) to help stop the spread of COVID-19
- Effective Sept 13, 2021 individuals age 12+ are required to show official proof of vaccination (BC Vaccination Card) in order to access a range of social, recreational, and discretionary events and businesses throughout BC
- Effective Oct 30, 2021 individuals age 12+ are required to show official proof of vaccination to [board flights and trains in Canada](#):
  - o domestic or international flights departing from most airports in Canada, including charter and foreign airlines carrying commercial passengers
  - o VIA Rail and Rocky Mountaineer trains

The information related to COVID-19 vaccinations continues to evolve at a rapid pace. The information provided in this toolkit is accurate as of the day of publishing. For current information, please refer to the [COVID-19 Vaccinations](#) page on the go2HR website

## BC Vaccination Card

As of Sept 13, 2021, individuals age 12+ are required to show proof of vaccination in order to access a range of social, recreational, and discretionary events and businesses throughout BC. This measure is being taking to increase the vaccination rate across the province and provide confidence to fully vaccinated people that those around them are also fully vaccinated.

These requirements were to expire on January 31, 2022 however have been extended to June 30, 2022.

More Information:

[Proof of vaccination information for businesses](#)

[Proof of vaccination and the BC Vaccine Card](#)

[Access Your BC Vaccination Card](#)

## Vaccinations in BC Workplaces

There has been a shift in both public and private sentiment regarding mandatory vaccines in the workplace however the laws around these types of policies remain unchanged. Employers continue to have a right to manage their workplace and to protect their business interests and an obligation to provide a safe workplace for their employees.

In recent weeks governments, universities, and other large employers have indicated that they will require in-person employees to be vaccinated:

- Workers in private and public long-term care facilities in BC must now be vaccinated as of Oct 12, 2021. Care homes and assisted-living facilities will be required to provide a vaccination status for all staff to the BC Provincial Health Officer. Effective immediately, unvaccinated volunteers, personal service workers are not permitted into these facilities
- All federal public servants and those working in federal crown corporations and certain other federally regulated industries (e.g. airlines) must be vaccinated as of the end of October 2021
- As of November 1, 2021, all WorkSafeBC employees who interact in person with employers, workers, members of the public, or other WorkSafeBC staff are to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19

# Should You Have a Mandatory Vaccination Policy for Your Employees? 8 Considerations

Employers may choose to implement a mandatory vaccination policy as a condition of new or continued employment.

Although the number of workplaces across Canada who are adopting mandatory vaccination policies is increasing, **vaccination policies for employees are not required by legislation in BC** and may still be subject to legal challenges that could give rise to significant liabilities.

Therefore, each workplace needs to assess their individual circumstances and develop a policy that is reasonable for their situation and employees. As workplaces and situations vary, a mandatory vaccine policy that is considered reasonable for one workplace may not be viewed in the same manner for another.

Below are 8 considerations to help determine whether or not you should have a vaccination policy for your employees:

## 1. Purpose of a Mandatory Vaccination Policy

What would be the purpose of having a mandatory vaccination policy in your workplace? What would you seek to achieve through implementing a policy?

Is a policy necessary or could the risks related to COVID-19 be eliminated, controlled or minimized through other means?

Examples:

- increased vaccination education or awareness (posters, discussions, incentives)
- increased access to vaccinations (promoting vaccination clinic dates/times, mobile clinics)
- reminding employees that they can take [up to 3 hours of paid leave](#) to be vaccinated against COVID-19, as guided by BC employment standards

## 2. Employee Privacy

How would you ensure that access to employee personal information is minimized, controlled and safeguarded?

BC Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)

- PIPA restricts an employer from requesting access to unnecessary personal medical information
- An individual's personal medical information is confidential, private information that must only be accessed, used, disclosed and destroyed in accordance with privacy legislation
- Employers do not have the right to disclose their employee's personal health information. They have a duty to protect the confidentiality of workers' private medical records. This information may only be shared with others if it relates to the employer's duty to accommodate the employee

## 3. Enforcement & Non-Compliance

How will the policy be enforced? Who will be responsible for enforcement? What procedures are to be followed in the event of non-compliance? Do responsible individuals have the proper authority and training to enforce compliance with the policy?

**TIP:** Have clear procedures in place to support enforcement and address non-compliance with the policy. Ensure supervisors and managers are fully aware of the policy and procedures and what they are to do in the event of non-compliance

What will the consequences be should employees not comply with the mandatory vaccine policy?

- Ensure clear language in the policy to address non-compliance (e.g. Failing to follow this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.)

How will you ensure consistency of enforcement, for all staff?

#### 4. **Accommodations:**

How will you accommodate employees who cannot be vaccinated (e.g. religious or medical reasons)?

- Human Rights legislation protects Canadians and British Columbians from discrimination on a number of grounds, including (but not limited to): religion, political belief, physical disability, and sex
- Employers are required to provide accommodation for employees who choose, for different reasons, not to get vaccinated or cannot receive the COVID-19 vaccine based on a protected ground, to the point of undue hardship.

Accommodations options will vary based on the specific needs of the individual and employer's situation and may include:

- flexible work arrangements (e.g. working from home, other COVID-19 safety protocols - physical distancing, barriers)
- COVID-19 rapid testing, for eligible employees. More information: [NEW go2HR TOOL: COVID-19 Rapid Testing in the Workplace](#)
- offering job options that do not involve interacting with guests or other staff

#### 5. **Proof of Vaccination**

- What will be accepted as proof of vaccination? E.g. vaccine passports
- What proof will be required to offer accommodation?

#### 6. **Potential Impact**

What impact would a mandatory vaccination policy have on existing employees? Is a policy necessary or would it create additional challenges in the workplace?

Examples:

- Businesses may risk losing employees if they don't agree with a mandatory policy
- Managers and supervisors would need to be able to ensure consistent compliance and enforcement of the policy
- In some situations, employee may feel safer and retention may increase as a result of a policy

#### 7. **Risks:**

While more and more businesses are choosing to institute mandatory vaccine policies, employers should be aware of potential risks when implementing these. Some of the risks could include:

- Human rights challenges based on protected grounds (e.g. not considering a health condition that may cause an employee not to take the vaccine)
- Employment standard act challenges related to termination
- Common law challenges related to wrongful dismissal

Legal advice should be obtained before enforcing mandatory vaccine policies to minimize/mitigate any potential risks.

## 8. Communication

How will the policy be communicated to staff?

### Tips:

- Discuss policy during staff meetings/briefings
- Post a copy of the policy in a location visible to employees
- Require all employees to sign a copy of the policy to awareness and acknowledge receipt. Keep this document in their employee file

# Vaccination Policies - What BC Tourism & Hospitality Employers are doing

In response to the changing attitudes as well as increasing expectations regarding personal safety from their guests, employees, property owners or boards, tourism and hospitality employers across BC have started considering or implementing vaccination related policies and/or incentives in their workplaces – for staff and guests.

As business situations vary, so too do the types of policies and incentives being offered. Below is an overview of a range of policies and incentives that industry employers have implemented:

Employer	Policy/Incentive	Insights
Sun Peaks Resort & Sun Peaks Grand Hotel & Conference Centre	<p>Prioritizing staff housing for staff who are fully vaccinated for the 2021/22 winter season</p> <p><b>UPDATE:</b> Implemented a mandatory vaccine policy for all staff, volunteers and contractor that interact with guests, including staff housing, for the 2021/22 winter season</p>	<p>Policy is to encourage people to get vaccinated as well as to ensure they are not mixing vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in shared accommodation units</p> <p><b>UPDATE:</b> This messaging is sent anyone applying for positions within SPR and Grand hotel.</p> <p>They have received little to no push back from new employees and minimal staff loss from those fulltime year-round staff that the policy was also applied to.</p>
SilverStar Mountain Resort	Require all staff to be fully vaccinated for the 2021/22 winter season	View their <a href="#">Vaccine Employment Requirement statement</a> on their website



The Wickaninnish Inn	Mandatory vaccination policy is in place for all guest and employees	
The Cove Lakeside Resort	Offering 2 prize draws (\$250 gift card each) for employees	<p>To increase vaccination awareness of and encourage staff vaccinations. Only the winners will need to show proof of vaccination</p> <p><b>UPDATE:</b> Employees are required to state their vaccination status to their HR manager, as part of this program.</p> <p>This incentive has helped encourage some employees to become vaccinated.</p> <p>The Cove has recently applied to participate in <a href="#">SafeScreenBC's Rapid Testing program</a>.</p>
Predator Ridge	<p>In mid-August the leadership decided to implement a phased-in mandatory vaccination policy for all guests and staff:</p> <p>First shot was due by September 1, second by October 24 for all front facing staff roles</p> <p>Also hosted 3 pop-up clinics within their community for residents and staff</p> <p>Learn more about the <a href="#">Predator Ridge vaccination policy</a> on their website</p>	<p>They have some staff who chose to leave or end their seasonal employment early, as a result of the vaccination requirement however remaining staff appreciate the policy</p> <p>They had 3 team members move from guest-facing positions to other positions, at the same pay and status</p>
Hotel (name withheld)	Strongly encouraging all employees to get vaccinated but do not have a mandate at this time. Reminding employees that they can take up to 3 hours of paid time off to get the vaccinated, and helping them get the time off	<b>UPDATE:</b> As a result of the reminders about paid time, had a few more people take time off to get vaccinated.
Inn at Laurel Point	<p>No vaccination policy in place for employees. They are advising guests that it is a personal choice, however they continue to conduct daily health checks and staff are not to go to work if they are sick</p> <p>They are following all PHO mandates and have COVID practices in each department that they are happy to share with their guests</p>	They have had colleagues leave work early and use the paid to get vaccinated and some others have used their additional sick days as a result of getting vaccinated

	They started offering a 2 hour top up before the 3-hour paid time off legislation came into play. They also pay for 2 additional sick days if a colleague experiences side effects from the vaccination.	
<b>NEW</b> Copper Point Resort	In lieu of a mandatory vaccination policy and as part of their COVID-19 Safety Plan, require employees to participate in weekly rapid antigen testing and follow protocols should they receive a positive result.	They are working directly with the BC Provincial Health Services Authority (BC PHSA) to establish and run their rapid testing program, including ordering test kits.
<b>NEW</b> Hotel Zed (Tofino)	Requires employees living in staff housing to either show proof of double vaccination or participate in 2 rapid antigen tests per week. They have also successfully deployed rapid testing when we have had a known COVID case and could test close contacts (when Island Health was not offering testing for asymptomatic people).  They believe this helped limited the spread to a handful of cases and their business to remain operational.  They have now expanded test availability to all Accent and Zed locations for the purpose of limiting transmission within the staff group.	Availability of testing has been well received and provided an alternative to vaccine mandates in staff housing.  They are very glad we signed up in September and had it available by November. You don't think you need it until you do.  It was a key measure to have in place when public health stopped contact tracing and providing asymptomatic testing.
Other Employers	Required all current staff to be fully vaccinated by October 24, and all new staff to be fully vaccinated before starting work for the 2021/22 winter season	
	Require all staff housing residents to be fully vaccinated for the 2021/22 winter season	

# LEGAL INSIGHTS & ARTICLES – COVID-19 Workplace Vaccination Policies

## Recent BC Human Rights Tribunal Decision:

*The following summarizes a key legal development in British Columbia employment law related to vaccinations in the workplace, provided by Natasha Jategaonkar, Mathews, Dinsdale & Clark LLP.*

**On September 9, 2021, the BC Human Rights Tribunal released a decision related to the proof-of-vaccination regime and noteworthy for employers.**

The decision in *Complainant obo Class of Persons v. John Horgan*, 2021 BCHRT 120, is a screening decision issued in response to a complaint filed on behalf of “people who are opposed to being forced into getting the COVID-19 Vaccination and getting our basic human rights and freedoms stripped from us”, understood to be in relation to the earlier announcement that a proof of vaccination would be required to access various services in BC, beginning September 13, 2021.

The Complainant filed her complaint on the basis of the protected characteristic of “political belief” in the area of employment, likely because political belief is only a ground of discrimination in relation to employment, employment advertisements, and membership in employment-related organizations such as unions. It is not a protected characteristic in relation to accommodation, service and facility.

“Political belief” for the purposes of the BC *Human Rights Code* includes “public discourse on matters of public interest which involves or would require action at a governmental level”.

The complaint was dismissed on the basis that it made no allegations of an actual adverse impact experienced in employment. In its analysis, the Tribunal stated as follows (para 11):

I accept that a genuinely held belief opposing government rules regarding vaccination could be a political belief within the meaning of the *Code*. In saying this, however, I stress that protection from discrimination based on political belief does not exempt a person from following provincial health orders or rules. Rather, it protects a person from adverse impacts in their employment based on their beliefs.

The Tribunal’s statement above seems to suggest that employees who experience an adverse impact in the workplace due to their views regarding BC’s proof-of-vaccination regime can make a valid complaint of discrimination on the basis of political belief.

## Legal Articles:

[No job, no job: What accommodations are employers legally bound to offer? | HRD Canada \(hcamag.com\)](#)

[B.C.’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner Releases “Proof of Vaccination” Guidance - Mathews Dinsdale & Clark LLP](#)

[Is refusing a vaccine considered a frustration of contract? | Canadian HR Reporter](#)

# NEW FAQs: Preparing to Implement a COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for Employees

The following FAQs are a recap of common employer inquiries that the go2HR team has been responding to. If you have a question about COVID-19 vaccination policies that you don't see covered here, please feel free to contact us [hr@go2hr.ca](mailto:hr@go2hr.ca)

**Q: We were planning to announce our new vaccination policy to staff on Friday and then a majority of them will be off for the weekend. Is this the best timing?**

While there may never be ideal timing. Consider leaving time (work days) between the policy roll out and staff days off to provide access to managers for follow up questions and discussions about the policy.

**Q: What happens if we send out seasonal employment offers to staff and they are accepted before we have a vaccination policy in place?**

Ensure employment offers/contracts state a requirement to comply with all employment policies, including COVID-19 safety policies and protocols. Contact new hires as soon as the vaccination policy is implemented to advise of the change and provide notice that proof of vaccination will be required prior to their start date.

**Q: Can we require new seasonal employees to be full vaccinated prior to their start date?**

Yes. Provide notice in advance and incorporate COVID-19 full vaccination status as a term of employment within new employee contracts.

**Q: Can we mention our mandatory employee vaccination policy in job postings?**

If a mandatory vaccination policy is in place for your employees, a sound HR practice would be to mention the requirement in job postings as a condition of employment. Below are a few recent examples from job postings on the go2HR job board.

**Example 1:**

*As a term of employment, all employees must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Proof of vaccination is required. (Wickaninnish Inn)*

**Example 2:**

*BC Hydro employees are required to provide proof they are fully vaccinated effective November 22, 2021. (Tour Guide position)*

**Example 3:**

*Rocky Mountaineer (RM) is committed to the safety and health of our team members through providing a safe working environment. As a federally regulated transportation organization, we have a duty to comply with all applicable legislative requirements.*

*Therefore, all individuals who will start working with RM on November 12, 2021 onwards, will be required to present proof of vaccination confirming they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to beginning their employment. An individual is fully vaccinated 14 days after receiving their second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series or their first dose of a one-dose approved vaccine by Health Canada. Offers of employment to start work with RM on or after November 12, 2021 will be conditional upon receipt of proof of the job candidate being fully vaccinated against COVID-19.*

*Note: Reasonable accommodations will be considered if they comply with the medical or religious exemptions permitted by applicable federal legislation and ministerial orders.*

**Example 4:**

*Pursuit (FlyOver Canada) strongly recommends all staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19; as vaccine policies vary between the US and Canada, some unvaccinated candidates may be subject to certain restrictions.*

**Example 5:**

*We (SilverStar Mountain Resort) believe requiring all staff to be vaccinated is the best way to protect one another, our guests and our communities and is crucial to ending the pandemic. As such, we will now be requiring all employees to have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by November 8, 2021 and be fully vaccinated by December 10, 2021. Employees hired after November 9 will be required to show evidence that they have received at least one dose of the vaccine prior to employment.*

**Q: What if we have long term employees who refuse to comply with our mandatory vaccination policy?**

This can be a challenging situation. It will be important for employers to fully understand the reason behind someone's refusal to comply. In some situations, employers may have a duty to accommodate (e.g. medical or religious exemptions).

Depending on the situation, employers may choose to work with the employee to incorporate other COVID-19 protocols (e.g. rapid testing), provide reasonable alternate employment (e.g. remote work or work that doesn't require interactions with colleagues or guests), put the employee on a paid or unpaid leave or terminate their employment. Each of these options needs to be considered carefully as there are pros and cons and some carry more legal risk than others.

**Q: Our employees have been telling us (voluntarily) whether or not they are planning to get vaccinated. Can we inform guests that we have non-vaccinated employees on our team?**

Yes, but do not identify individual employees.

**Q: What if we hear indirectly that an employee doesn't want to get vaccinated, can we reassign them to non-guest contact work?**

- It's best to be transparent, and to not guess or act on rumour
- Have a policy in place regarding the collection/use/disclosure of vaccination status.
- And, beware of risk ... e.g. human rights complaints of adverse treatment based on "perceived" disability (i.e., infection or infection risk); or constructive dismissal, if the reassignment amounts to a unilateral change of a fundamental term of employment.

**Q: What can we do if employees don't want to work with other employees, because they refuse to get vaccinated?**

This is really a question about workplace safety and invokes the protocols associated with an employee's right to refuse "unsafe" work – see [HERE](#) for more information.

In short, if sufficient safety protocols are in place – i.e., if the workplace is "safe", notwithstanding the fact that some employees are not vaccinated – an employee will not likely have the right to refuse to work.

**Q: How can we address anti-vaccination employees who spread misinformation to other employees in efforts to discourage them from getting vaccinated?**

Manage much like any other disruptive behavior – think about chatter concerning politics, or religion. While an employee is entitled to his/her own opinion, such talk can become disruptive in a workplace and an employer is free to insist that it stop.

**Q: If we do decide to implement a mandatory vaccination policy, what is a reasonable length of time to keep that employee personal data?**

For as long as the Employer may need to refer to and rely on that information, and for as long thereafter as might be necessary to explain/justify employment decisions.

When in doubt, hold (securely) for at least two years and then have it permanently destroyed.

**Q: How can we address vaccination hesitancy amongst our employees?**

Education, education, education ... easy access to information.

Consider offering in-house “expert sessions”, to address and discuss employee concerns

**Q: Could rapid testing be incorporated into workplace vaccination policies?**

Yes, in some situations rapid testing for employees may be used to support mandatory vaccination policies (e.g. for employees who cannot or refuse to get vaccinated).

**Q: One of the considerations under WorkSafeBC in order to determine whether a COVID-19 vaccination was a requirement of employment is “#3 The worker is convinced that it was necessary to receive the inoculation or injection, in spite of objective evidence from the employer that the process was not compulsory.”**

**How can employers navigate that fine line between encouraging employees to vaccinate and not have them be “convinced” that it was necessary or mandatory?**

Make the “voluntary” nature of policy VERY clear – put it in writing Or, just accept that this risk (which appears to be exceptionally low) is worthwhile and outweighed by the value of maximizing vaccination rates.

**Q: Employers cannot ask employees if they are vaccinated (or intend to vaccinate) but can they ask job applicants?**

The same rules apply to applicants and employees – consent is necessary and/or clear notice of the purpose for the collection/use/disclosure of the information.

## **Article: How to Prevent Vaccination Conflicts at Work**

We have all been conditioned to not talk about politics or religion at work because of potentially explosive outcomes – but what about someone’s COVID vaccination status? [Read more...](#)

# TOOL: COVID-19 Vaccinations Q&A – Addressing Employee Hesitations

The topic of vaccinations can be a challenging one for employers to discuss with employees, to help provide guidance we have captured below some of the more common questions and provided guidance for responses.

## **SAMPLE Employer Support Statement:**

Vaccination will play a critical role in the prevention of COVID-19 among workers and the public.

At [BUSINESS NAME] we strongly support BC's COVID-19 Immunization plan and encourage all employees who are able to get vaccinated to do so. We offer paid time off to all employees to get vaccinated, and (any other support?).

If you have any questions or concerns, please see your manager or human resources. [INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION]

## **What If...**

### **I can't afford to take time off to get vaccinated?**

- Under BC's Employment Standards COVID-19 Paid Vaccination Leave employees are entitled to take up to 3 hours of paid leave in order to get vaccinated against COVID-19
- They can also take additional time to receive additional doses
- If you need time off during work to attend a vaccination appointment, please let your manager know.
- We ask that you please provide as much notice as possible and a copy of your vaccine appointment confirmation at the time of your request.

### **I don't know if I am eligible to get vaccinated, or to receive a booster shot?**

- To find out if you are eligible, please visit the provincial government's [B.C.'s COVID-19 Immunization Plan website](#).

### **I don't know how to book an appointment?**

- You can register [online](#) (fastest option), by phone or in person at all Service BC offices.
- More information: [How to get vaccinated for COVID-19 - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

### **What if I feel ill after I get the vaccination and can't come to work?**

- We support employees who choose to receive the vaccine. If you find that you are in this situation please speak with your manager. Our sick leave policy is... *(advise employees if they would be entitled to paid or unpaid time off, etc.)*
- A reminder that as of Jan 1, 2022 BC employees are entitled to 5 days paid Illness or Injury leave (Sick days) per employment year.

**I am unable to get vaccinated for COVID-19 for personal reasons. I don't want that to affect my job. What should I do?**

We value our employees and respect your privacy. Please speak to your manager about your course of action.

**What if I feel that I have a medical condition that exempts me from being vaccinated?**

Please speak with your manager. We will provide accommodations for individuals who are exempt from receiving the vaccine due to medical reasons.

**I refuse to be vaccinated as family members have had severe reactions to vaccinations in the past. I don't want the same to happen to me.**

We recommend that you book an appointment with your doctor to discuss and address your concerns. Please keep us informed.

The BC Centre for Disease Control (BC CDC) provides information related to vaccine considerations here: [Vaccine Considerations \(bccdc.ca\)](https://bccdc.ca) that you may be interested in.

**Once I am vaccinated, do I still have to follow our COVID-19 Safety protocols or Provincial Health orders?**

Yes. We are all required to follow our current COVID-19 Safety Plan and [provincial health orders](#) to protect ourselves and others.



# ARTICLE & TIPS: How to Support Employee Mental Health as COVID-19 Restrictions Start to Ease

Adapted and with text from "[Managing the mental health effects of COVID-19 in the workplace: A guide for employers](#)", WorkSafe BC.

As an employer, supporting the health and safety of your workers, including their mental health, is especially important during this stressful time. You may be in the best position to both identify mental health issues in your workers and to respond to them in appropriate, meaningful ways. And, according to research conducted during the pandemic, when workers feel their safety has been addressed by their employers, they report less anxiety and less depression.



## Common Reactions to Stress - What You Might See in Your Employees During This Time:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working too much or too little</li><li>• Reduced productivity, difficulty concentrating on tasks, easily distracted</li><li>• Late to work or absent</li><li>• Social isolation, withdrawal from others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agitation, irritability, anger, sadness, fatigue</li><li>• Hypervigilance</li><li>• Other <b>changes</b> in mood and behaviours</li></ul>
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## How Can You (Employers) Support Employees?

Start with education, provide factual information, and continue to take the necessary steps to ensure physical safety. Trusted sources you can refer to include the World Health Organization, the BC Centre for Disease Control, and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Try to find a balance between information related to business operations, mental health and pandemic response, and positive stories.

You can also consider how your workplace can play a role in promoting wellbeing, such as:

- facilitating the scheduling of breaks and coverage for employees on breaks if necessary;
- being mindful of the separation between home and work life (e.g. don't ask employees to check emails or respond to work calls after hours);
- sharing self-care strategies and promoting [mental health resources](#)

### TIP

*Check-in regularly with employees so that you get to know their "normal" and potentially notice sooner if they could use some help. Too often, we miss or avoid conversations because of a lack of relationship with workers.*

## Stay Connected and Prioritize Communication

Communication should be consistent, timely, and clear. Ensure your workers feel they can share concerns they may have with you or their supervisors.

If you're worried about a worker's stress, anxiety, or wellbeing in general, start a conversation with them. You don't have to have all the answers or know the "right" thing to say. Some simple prompts to get started:

"I know there is a lot changing around us, how are you managing?"

"I have noticed [*name the changes you have been observing*]. What can I do to support you?"

If the employee's concerns go beyond what you can help with at work, you might consider saying something such as, "I don't have the answers, but let's find someone who can help."

### TIP

*Remember that workers may have family or close friends in other provinces or abroad and continue to be deeply affected by the pandemic, even while BC's restrictions start to ease. Be sure to check in with your employees frequently so you can anticipate the support or information they may need.*

## Sample Policies

### Tool: **SAMPLE Mandatory Vaccination Policy**



Download this SAMPLE policy [here](#)

# Tool: SAMPLE Employee Time Off Request form



Download SAMPLE form [here](#)

## Employee Information:

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Request: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Requested: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (inclusive)

Time(s) Requested: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (if less than 1 day)

Total # Hours Requested: \_\_\_\_\_

## Type of Leave Requested:

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Sick Day(s)  Paid  Unpaid  COVID-19 Leave  Paid  Unpaid

COVID-19 Vaccination, Paid (*up to 3 hours max.*)

Personal Illness or Injury Leave  Family Responsibility Leave

Maternity or Parental Leave  Compassionate Care Leave

Bereavement Leave  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Vacation - I acknowledge that I have (or will have) accrued sufficient time to cover requested vacation.

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Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved  Denied

Manager Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Tool: **SAMPLE Employee Sick Leave Policy**



Download this **SAMPLE** policy [here](#)

## **Overview**

At [COMPANY NAME] we believe that our employees are the reason for our success. We value our employees and want to be responsive and supportive during times of illness or personal emergency. This policy will provide guidance related to [paid and/or unpaid] leaves that are available to assist our employees in these circumstances. A paid leave is not a right, a benefit or an entitlement, but rather available to you if and when you need it.

## **Guidelines**

Prompt and regular work attendance is required to maintain an effective business; however, we recognize that life happens. If you must be absent from work on a given day, you are required to notify your manager [INSERT CONTACT METHOD(S)], [INSERT TIMELINE – E.G. no later than your regular starting time].

[COMPANY NAME] staff may be allowed up to **10 paid days off per calendar year for sick leave. Up to 2 of these days may be personal days** as described below. Unused sick or personal leave is not paid out to employees at any time. Absences due to sick or personal leave must be recorded as such on your timesheet.

## ***Illness***

It is inevitable that employees will become ill from time to time. In order to maintain a healthy workplace and prevent the spread of illness, we ask that you remain at home when you are sick.

Sick time is allocated on January 1<sup>st</sup> each year. Sick time is pro-rated for employees who commence employment after January 1. Unused sick time cannot be carried over from year to year. For any absence longer than 3 days, a doctor's note may be requested.

## ***Personal Days***

[COMPANY NAME] recognizes that not all personal commitments can be taken care of outside of working hours and that emergencies may arise which require immediate attention by employees. To assist employees in responding to these types of situations, employees to use their 2 allocated personal days as outlined below:

- Parent/teacher school meetings
- Children's significant school activities; for example, Sports Day or Christmas concerts
- Emergency child-care issues
- Personal business appointments that cannot be handled outside of normal working hours such as emergency home repairs or appointments with banks and lawyers
- Personal residence move that cannot be completed outside of work hours
- Other circumstances as approved by your manager

Use of personal days must be approved in writing by your manager in advance when possible, and immediately following use if the personal day is the result of an emergency. Personal days cannot be carried over from year to year.

To request a personal day, please contact your manager [INSERT PROCESS DETAILS]

### **Medical, Dental or Related Appointments**

We ask that appointments (e.g. medical, dental or related) be scheduled at the beginning or end of the day wherever possible, to minimize disruption to your work schedule

Please notify your manager in advance, with as much notice as possible, for all time off required to attend appointments.

If appointments are virtual or employees are able to coordinate with their manager to adjust their work schedule, there will be no impact to your sick leave or pay. Appointments of ½ day or more will reduce your annual sick leave.

### **COVID-19 Leaves (Temporary)**

Please refer to our [COMPANY NAME] COVID-19 Safety Policy for guidelines and what to do if you feel ill, have been exposed or diagnosed with COVID-19.

Employees are entitled to the following temporary leave provisions, related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined and guided by [BC Employment Standards](#):

#### **COVID-19 Paid Vaccination Leave**

- Employees can take up to **3 hours of paid leave** to be vaccinated against COVID-19. If necessary, they can take additional paid leave for a second dose.
- Employees are entitled to this leave no matter how long they have been employed.
- Paid leave is retroactive to April 19, 2021.

**COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave** – You can take *up to 3 days of paid leave* between May 20 - Dec 31, 2021 if you're unable to work for any of the following reasons:

- You have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are following the instructions of a medical health officer or the advice of a doctor or nurse
- You are in isolation or quarantine and are acting in accordance with an [order of the provincial health officer](#), an order made under the Quarantine Act (Canada), guidelines from the BC Centre for Disease Control or guidelines from the Public Health Agency of Canada
- Your employer has directed you not to work due to concern about your exposure to others

**Unpaid COVID-19 leave** - Employees may be entitled to an unpaid, leave of absence, if you are unable to work for specific reasons, related to COVID-19 as outlined by the [BC Employment Standards](#).

- If you are in this situation, please contact your manager as soon as possible so that we may support you
- Employees may be asked to provide reasonable proof that they are entitled to this leave

**Illness or Injury Leave** – Effective January 1, 2022, eligible employees may take with up to 5 days of paid sick leave per employment year, for any personal illness or injury.

- If you are in a situation that requires one of these leaves, please contact your manager as soon as possible so that we may support you
- Employees may be asked to provide reasonable proof that they are entitled to this leave

If you are affected by COVID-19 and require one of these leaves, please advise your manager as soon as possible [by phone or text].

## Mental Health – Resource Links

The COVID-19 pandemic and situations related to vaccinations in the workplace can be challenging and take a toll on an individual’s mental health. If you or your employees are looking for mental health support, information and resources can be found [here](#).

### Acknowledgement

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