**Australian Government**

# COVID-19 VACCINATION

**Keep your disability workforce up to date by circulating this alert widely in your organisation**

# Disability Provider Alert

14 June 2023

## Use of bivalent COVID-19 vaccines as a primary course

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) advises that a bivalent COVID-19 vaccine is now preferred over original (ancestral) vaccines for primary course vaccination for people aged 12 and older.

ATAGI recommends that people aged:

- 12-17 years receive a BA.4-5-containing bivalent vaccine for both the primary course and booster doses

- 18 years and older receive either a BA.1-containing bivalent vaccine or a BA.4-5-containing bivalent vaccine for both the primary course and booster doses

- 12 and older who have commenced their primary course with an original (ancestral) vaccine complete the course with a bivalent vaccine.

ATAGI considers that there are no extra safety concerns when using bivalent vaccines for the primary course, compared with the original vaccines. The number of doses and the interval between the doses are the same for the bivalent vaccine and the original (ancestral).

This advice may affect a small number of Australians considering their primary course COVID-19 vaccination.

At this time there is no bivalent vaccine available for children aged 6 months – 11 years. This group should continue to receive existing original vaccines.

ATAGI continues to recommend primary course vaccination in all people from 5 years of age. A primary course consists of two doses, or three doses for those who are severely immunocompromised.

The COVID-19 2023 Booster Advice outlines who should receive or consider, a 2023 COVID-19 booster.

## Disability Worker COVID-19 Leave Grant

The Disability Worker COVID-19 Leave Grant will support disability workers who:

- give close personal support to National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants and
- contract COVID-19 and have insufficient sick leave.

NDIS providers will be reimbursed if they pay eligible staff leave when they have a COVID-19 infection and no leave entitlement. Reimbursement will be paid at a rate of:

- $450 per worker, where the worker has lost at least eight hours but less than 20 hours of work
- $750 per worker, where the worker has lost more than 20 hours of work.

Registered and unregistered NDIS providers and sole traders who give specified close personal supports to participants are eligible.

The grant will give support towards the costs of leave from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023. Affected workers should keep evidence of their illness.

## COVID-19 and Influenza Immunisation History Statement

The new COVID-19 and Influenza Immunisation History Statement (IHS) displays a person's vaccination information contained on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). It can be used as evidence for employment purposes, instead of providing a full vaccination history. The Department's website has information on how to get your IHS.

## Updated Infection Control Training

Heading into the winter months, it is vital that workers are up to date with the latest online training. (This is available on the NDIS Commission's COVID-19 Resources for Workers page):

Maintaining safe and effective infection control in disability settings (nds.org.au). This recently refreshed course aims to equip workers with evidence-based knowledge to prevent and control infection. The course reflects current Work Health Safety legislation, standards and industry codes of practice. It was developed with input from disability workers and focuses on increasing capability of workers with little or no infection control knowledge or skill. It is available online at a fee.

Supporting People to Stay Infection Free (teamdsc.com.au). This course covers COVID-19 basics with an overview of the broader approaches to infection prevention and control in disability. It explores how the NDIS Code of Conduct interacts with safety and choice - and infection prevention strategies in people's homes and community activities. The course is free and available online.

training.gov.au - HLTSS00083 - Infection Prevention and Control Skill Set (training.gov.au). This short course provides people in a range of industry and work settings with the skills and knowledge to apply basic infection prevention and control principles. This includes implementing standard and transmission-based precautions and responding to risks. It is available through several Registered Training Organisations at a fee and is a nationally recognised competency.

Infection Prevention and Control eLearning Modules | Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (safetyandquality.gov.au). The Commission offers several online learning modules. These aim to give detailed information on infection prevention and control in Australian healthcare settings. The modules are free.

## 2023 COVID-19 Vaccination Booster Rollout

The Department of Health and Aged Care is working with Primary Health Networks (PHNs) across Australia to contact disability service providers about the 2023 COVID-19 booster rollout. PHNs help sites to find primary care vaccination options, including in-reach services provided on site.

If you have not heard from your local PHN and you need help to find a COVID-19 booster service provider, you can find the contact details of your PHN here. If you have any other questions about the 2023 COVID-19 booster, email the Department's COVID-19 vaccine disability team.

**Support for people with disability, providers, carers and families
Disability Gateway on 1800 643 787 - open from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday to
Friday.**

Department of Health and Aged Care website at www.health.gov.au

National Coronavirus and COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on **1800 020 080.** People with disability, their families and carers should choose Option 5, disability workers should choose Option 4.

For information in a language other than English, choose Option 8. This is a free service.

The Translating and Interpreting Service is also available on **131 450**.

For people who are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, call the National Relay Service on **133 677**.

Don't miss the latest news and updates about COVID-19 and other health matters – follow the Department of Health and Aged Care on Facebook.