



Consent guidance for providers of disability residential accommodation

Updated November 2021

National COVID-19 Vaccination Program

The COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary for most people. Some people who work in particular jobs may be required to get the vaccine. This includes disability support workers in most jurisdictions. This is based on expert medical advice from the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee](#).

Disability providers are encouraged to talk to people with disability they support and their workers about having the vaccine. The vaccine is a way to protect people with disability, workers and the wider community.

This will also give people with disability and workers time to make an informed decision and seek advice from their GP. Disability providers can also contact Public Guardians where required. These processes may take time.

What consent do people with disability need to give before they have the COVID-19 vaccine?

All Australians must give [informed consent](#) before having the COVID-19 vaccine. This is the same as with all other vaccines.

The Department of Health has developed a written [Consent Form](#) that people with disability and workers in residential settings can use. It is not a requirement to use this consent form – rather it can be used as a guide.

Providers should adopt their usual consent methods to get informed consent. This may be by using your usual consent form. You need to follow the specific rules in your jurisdiction (state or territory), if there are any. Written consent is preferred, but not mandatory.

What is important is that people with disability understand what they are agreeing to.

They should understand:

- what the COVID-19 vaccine is and what it is for
- the benefits of the vaccine
- the risks of the vaccine.

Consent should be given to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. It should not be for one particular vaccine such as Pfizer (Comirnaty), AstraZeneca (Vaxzevria) or Moderna (Spikevax).

Please ensure that you seek consent for all injections. Separate consent is needed each time an injection is received. This includes first and second doses, as well as a booster or third dose.

A person with disability, their family and carers can talk with GPs and other health professionals to discuss the risks and benefits of the vaccine. They can also ask if it is appropriate for someone to receive the vaccine. This may help to ensure there is informed consent to have the vaccine. Final consent is the decision of the person with disability and/or the person who supports them to make decisions.

GPs do not need to prescribe the COVID-19 vaccine for people with disability.

Resources about the COVID-19 vaccine

The following webpage links have information about the COVID-19 vaccines, the process of administering the vaccine and what it means to give consent. This information should be provided to the person with disability and/or substitute decision makers. It will help them make informed decisions about the COVID-19 vaccine. If the person with disability needs support to read this information, you should arrange to have this information read and/or explained to them.

- [COVID-19 vaccination – Patient resources](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination – Easy Read resources](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination – Auslan video resources.](#)

These phone services can help to answer questions about COVID-19 vaccines.

- Disability Gateway Helpline: **1800 643 787**
- The National Coronavirus Helpline: **1800 020 080**. Option 4 – for disability care workers. Option 5 - for callers with disability, their families or carers.
- If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can also call the National Relay Service on **133 677**.
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National): For translating and interpreting services call **131 450** and ask for the helpline you would like to be connected to.

Recording evidence of informed consent

It's important to keep a record of who has given consent to have the vaccine.

Disability service providers will need to supply evidence that you have provided informed consent to the vaccination team.

On the day the vaccine is administered, the vaccine team will ask for a copy of the consent form for their records.

If the person being vaccinated provides verbal consent only, the vaccination team will need clinical notes of that consent.

The vaccination providers may ask for a copy of the consent form. Providers will retain the original consent form.

What if someone needs support to decide whether to have the vaccine?

If someone needs support and has in place a substitute decision-maker (such as a legal guardian) or a person that usually supports them to make decisions, the decision-maker needs to consider the wishes and preferences of the person with disability around vaccinations. This includes considering previous decisions to have vaccinations.

The person with disability should be actively involved in the discussion and decision whether to have the vaccine. This should be in line with supported decision-making principles in each jurisdiction.

It is important to seek consent from your residents or their legal guardians. It is important to do this as early as possible to ensure they have time to give the consent.

For more information about consent, refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook – Preparing for vaccination – Valid consent](#).

Supported decision-making tools and resources

Some aspects of the following resources may be specific to the state or territory where they were developed.

- [NSW Public Guardian information on supported decision-making for people with a disability](#)
- [ADACAS Advocacy web-based decision-making tool in plain English for people with a disability \(needs a log in\)](#).

Advocacy organisations

Advocacy organisations can supply information and guidance and support people with disability to communicate their wishes. The final consent on whether to have the vaccine is the decision of the person with disability and/or the person who has legal authority to make decisions on their behalf.

To see the advocacy organisations visit [Disability Advocacy Finder \(dss.gov.au\)](https://dss.gov.au).

State and territory consent information

Information on consent for medical procedures for each state and territory can be found below:

- New South Wales - [COVID-19 vaccine and the role of legally appointed guardians | NSW Trustee and Guardian](#)
- Victoria - [Guideline on the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine | Office of the Public Advocate](#)
- Queensland - [Consent process for COVID-19 vaccination | Public Guardian Qld](#)
- South Australia - [Consent to medical treatment and healthcare](#)
- Western Australia - [Guardianship | Public Advocate WA](#)
- Tasmania - [COVID-19 Vaccination Consent | Public Guardian Tasmania](#)
- Northern Territory - [About guardianship | Office of the Public Guardian](#)
- Australian Capital Territory - [Guardianship | Public Guardian NT](#).