



Mandatory vaccination of residential aged care workers: next steps

The SVSS is available to support you beyond the 17 September mandate as you navigate the workforce implications and second dose.

The Department of Health has advised the following:

After the 17 September it will engage directly with providers and individual facilities to discuss the vaccination and exemption data as reported on My Aged Care, to clarify if there are any unvaccinated workers and where there may be exemptions that may apply.

The Department will take a proactive and constructive approach in contacting facilities directly to:

- Ensure continuity of resident care standards as a priority
- understand the reasons for non-medical exemptions or unvaccinated workers
- provide advice on the availability and access to a vaccine for unvaccinated workers
- provide advice on exemption requirements for the relevant state or territory public health order, and
- how to report exemptions correctly in the My Aged Care provider portal.

In anticipation:

Gather information and document your strategy for addressing non-medical exemptions and increasing vaccination rates, including a plan to ensure all current workers not yet vaccinated receive a minimum first dose COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.

The strategy should consider overall vaccination rates at your facility, roles undertaken by unvaccinated workers, the transmission risk in your local area and other measures in place to prepare and manage the risk of COVID-19.

What the Department will do next:

The Department will share information with the state or territory and, where relevant, make a recommendation on whether formal exemptions should apply (this is not an option in all jurisdictions).

The Department will also share information with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission for further action, including immediate referral where no appropriate strategy is identified by the facility and/or provider.

If strategies are not implemented to adequately minimise the risk of COVID-19 infection, including through workforce vaccination, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission may take action, including issuing sanctions.

The relevant state or territory may then take compliance action or impose penalties where compliance with the relevant public health order is not achieved. These penalties are detailed in the state and territory public health orders.

Contact your local peak state manager to discuss how you can proactively engage with the Department on issues of workforce or exemption.