



Document: Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation (SBAR)
Topic: Proof of Vaccination in Schools
Date of review: October 8, 2021
Date released: November 23, 2021
Submitted by: CoVaRR-Net
To: Federal Deputy Minister of Health, local and provincial Medical Health Officers, Urban Public Health Network, Variant of Concern Expert Panel, school divisions, colleges, and universities

Recommendations

Note these recommendations should be tailored to local and regional contexts, incidence rates, and current COVID-19 situations across Canada.

Federal Recommendation

1. Fund a network of collaborating researchers with the goal of having data collection, research, and evaluation of the different jurisdictional vaccination mandate policies, their effectiveness, and the resulting uptake, for cross-jurisdictional policy comparison.

Provincial and Territorial Recommendations

2. Provincially mandate proof of full vaccination among teachers, support staff, and students in all school and university settings where vaccine uptake is low and COVID-19 incidence is high. Establish a medical exemption program and ensure the availability of on-site vaccination clinics.
3. Provide detailed and up-to-date public reporting of vaccination rates, testing data and COVID-19 case data.

Local/Regional Recommendations

4. **School Divisions:** Mandate proof of full vaccination among teachers, support staff and volunteers. Work with the local health authority to establish a clear and transparent medical exemption program. Offer on-site vaccination clinics. Work with the health authority to promote immunization, and educate parents and students on the concept of herd immunity and the importance of high vaccine uptake in school, such as through the distribution of fact sheets.



5. **Universities:** Mandate proof of full vaccination among all faculty, staff, and students on campus. Establish a clear and transparent medical exemption program and work with the health authority to offer on-site vaccination clinics.

Situation

Researchers, public health experts and educators suggest keeping children and adults in an in-person learning environment is of top priority during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Canada, in-person learning has been prioritized in all jurisdictions (1,2). Attending school and facilitating in-person learning is essential to support the healthy development of children. During a pandemic, care needs to be taken to ensure this need is done as safely as possible. Requiring proof of vaccination in schools has been a topic of discussion among policy makers and public health experts. The following SBAR will explore considerations for developing a vaccination policy among various population groups, including, teachers and support staff, school children, children attending extra-curricular activities, as well as parents of children attending school.

Background

- Canada is currently experiencing a 4th wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, largely driven by the Delta variant (99.7% of cases as of September 12, 2021) (3). The highest percentage (20.4%) of cases in Canada is currently represented by those 19 years or younger, with those aged 20-29 representing the second-highest percentage (19.3%) of those infected (3).
- As of October 4, 2021, there are no COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in children under 12 in Canada.
- Provincial, territorial, and local policies implementing proof of vaccine mandates vary in requirements, roll-out, restrictiveness, and incentives or penalties (3).
- Requirements for vaccination of children in school are associated with increased vaccination rates and coverage of affected population groups (3). In most studies, it is not possible to attribute causality to a specific mandate (3).

Canadian Response

- In Canada, currently only three provinces, Ontario, British Columbia, and New Brunswick, have policies that require proof of vaccination within school settings (3,4).



- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) developed guidance for K-12 schools and post-secondary settings [here](#) (5).
 - PHAC recommends local and regional public health officials work with schools to identify strategies that could improve vaccine uptake. For example, emails and school signage encouraging vaccination and offering on site vaccination clinics are encouraged (5).
- Within Canada, in a school setting, the COVID proof of vaccination mandates have been seen primarily within the university setting. A large majority of post-secondary institutions in Canada have a proof of vaccination policy, as illustrated in Appendix A. For example, the University of Ottawa, University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, Western University, and University of Guelph all have proof of vaccination mandates for COVID. The universities have found the vast majority of students are now vaccinated and the rate of vaccination on campus is much higher than the rate of vaccination within the general public within the respective province (6).
- Three provinces, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia have provincially required proof of vaccination within K-12 schools among teachers and support staff. New Brunswick also requires full vaccination for eligible children to take part in extracurricular activities. See Appendix A for a summary of PT vaccination requirements at the school and university level.

International Response

- Proof of vaccination against COVID-19 is a strategy that has been growing internationally (3). Mandatory vaccination for school children is used in some parts of the world. For example, in most of the US states, children cannot enroll in state schools if vaccinations (not including COVID) are not up to date (7).
- Yale University implemented proof of vaccination for COVID-19. As of September 27, 2021, 99.4% of undergraduate students were fully vaccinated, as well as 97.8% of graduate and professional students, 95.1% of faculty, and 92.5% of staff (8).
- California recently announced the state's plan to require COVID vaccines for children to attend school. This was implemented the semester after the federal government had given it final approval (9).
- New York City implemented COVID-19 proof of vaccination amongst educators in all public schools with no option for a negative test opt-out (10).
- Bangladesh re-opened schools after 97% of the school's teachers and staff were vaccinated (11).

Assessment



- All jurisdictions have varying forms of vaccination mandates. There is currently no research available for cross-jurisdictional policy comparison of the implemented mandates and their effectiveness.
- Select universities and school divisions have required proof of vaccination amongst staff and eligible students attending schools in Canada. Various approaches and strategies have been utilized to improve vaccine uptake and ensure safe settings for in-person learning. However, it is crucial that efforts are taken to protect those not eligible to receive the vaccine and protect health care capacity.
- High quality implementation research utilizing whole-population coverage data is required (3). Prior to mandating vaccinations among eligible students, other approaches including improving access to vaccines and education should be utilized (3).
- Requiring proof of vaccinations among school-based children is not a new policy concept. Many school districts around the world require vaccinations against infectious diseases such as polio and rubella. If implementing vaccine mandates, then strategies to ensure vaccine availability within the school setting, as well as access to vaccine education, would be key. Research indicates herd immunity is poorly understood, and educating individuals on this topic, is helpful for vaccine acceptance (12).
- Education is a right in Canada. When implementing a proof of vaccination policy, authorities must ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccinations (e.g., vaccinations available on site at schools). Medical exemptions must be available.
- Ethical considerations, such as individual responsibility, collective responsibility, and institutional responsibility, are important to consider when implementing proof of vaccination programs (12,13).
- The rationale behind recommending proof of vaccination policies for school settings is to protect those not able to be vaccinated and by surrounding them with vaccinated individuals. A proof of vaccination policy should be implemented along with a suite of other public health orders, to decrease transmission of COVID-19. The policy may not be necessary in all jurisdictions; however, it may be important to implement in jurisdictions with low vaccination uptake and high COVID-19 incidence rates.
- Policy makers may also want to consider requiring proof of vaccination status for all eligible children attending school, children attending extra-curricular activities, as well as parents of children attending school. In some jurisdictions, such as Saskatchewan, school-age children becoming infected with COVID-19 is often the result of transmission from an unvaccinated family member (14).
- On site vaccination clinics for school-age children should be offered. This approach would need sustained public health investment to continue not only for the COVID-19 vaccine, but all childhood vaccinations.



Appendix A: Proof of Vaccination Policy by Canadian Province/Territory as of October 4, 2021

Jurisdiction	Proof of Vaccination within PTs/School Divisions	Proof of Vaccination Examples within Main Canadian Universities
British Columbia	No provincial-level mandate.	University of British Columbia: No mandate. Requires regular rapid testing for all students, staff, and faculty. Exceptions for those fully vaccinated (15). Unvaccinated individuals are required to take part in regular COVID-19 rapid testing.
Alberta	No provincial-level mandate.	University of Alberta: Everyone on campus is required to be fully vaccinated; rapid testing alternative no longer available without an approved exception (16). University of Calgary: All students, faculty, and staff are required to be vaccinated by Jan. 1, 2022 (winter semester) (17).
Saskatchewan	No provincial-level mandate. Saskatoon Public Schools, Regina Public Schools, Regina Catholic School Division, Prairie Valley School Division announced plans to require proof of vaccination among teachers and staff (18,19).	University of Saskatchewan: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (20). Unvaccinated individuals are required to provide frequent negative COVID-19 test results and a daily symptom checklist. University of Regina: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (21).
Manitoba	The Province of Manitoba mandated COVID vaccinations among teachers and support staff (22).	University of Manitoba: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (23). Unvaccinated individuals are required to undergo frequent, rapid asymptomatic testing.



		Brandon University: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (24). Unvaccinated individuals are required to have regular COVID-19 testing.
Ontario	<p>No provincial-level mandate.</p> <p>Ottawa Carleton District School board implemented mandatory vaccination for all teachers and staff (25).</p> <p>Ontario Public Schools</p>	<p>University of Ottawa: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (26).</p> <p>University of Toronto: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (26). Unvaccinated individuals must participate in the rapid screening program and provide proof of a negative result prior to visiting campus.</p> <p>University of Guelph: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (27).</p> <p>Western University: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (28). Unvaccinated individuals are required to be tested for COVID-19 twice per seven-day period.</p>
Quebec	No provincial-level mandate.	<p>McGill University: Announced a proof of vaccination policy for non-essential activities on campus (29).</p> <p>Laval University: No mandatory vaccination policy (30).</p>
New Brunswick	<p>The province of New Brunswick mandated COVID vaccination among teachers and support staff (31).</p> <p>Eligible students must be vaccinated to participate in extracurricular and intramural activities (31).</p>	<p>University of New Brunswick: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (32). Unvaccinated individuals are required to participate in regular COVID-19 testing.</p> <p>St. Thomas University: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (33).</p>



		<p>Mount Allison University: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (34). Unvaccinated individuals are required to undergo regular testing and mask-wearing.</p>
Nova Scotia	<p>The Province of Nova Scotia mandated COVID vaccination among teachers and staff in public schools (35).</p>	<p>Dalhousie University: All students, faculty, and staff are asked to provide proof of vaccination. If not vaccinated, will have to undergo COVID testing twice per week (36).</p> <p>St. Francis Xavier University: No university mandatory vaccination policy. Students, faculty, and staff are required to show proof of vaccination upon entry to an event open to the public (37).</p> <p>Mount Saint Vincent University: All students, faculty, and staff are required to provide proof of vaccination (38). Unvaccinated individuals are required to be tested for COVID-19 twice per seven-day period.</p>
Prince Edward Island	<p>No provincial-level mandate.</p>	<p>University of Prince Edward Island: All faculty, staff, and students required to be fully vaccinated (39).</p>
Newfoundland & Labrador	<p>No provincial-level mandate.</p> <p>Announcement released indicated potential vaccine mandate for public-sector workers including teachers (40).</p>	<p>Memorial University: All students, faculty, and staff are asked to provide proof of vaccination (41).</p>
Yukon	<p>No territorial-level mandate.</p>	<p>Yukon University: No vaccination mandate (42).</p>
Northwest Territories	<p>No territorial-level mandate.</p> <p>Government announced a potential COVID vaccine mandate</p>	<p>N/A</p>



	for some employees in the public sector. Details not released (43).	
Nunavut	No territorial-level mandate.	N/A

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Suggested Citation

Rowein S, Marks WN, Camillo CA, Muhajarine N. Proof of Vaccination in Schools. November 2021. Document no.: [6.1]. CoVaRR-Net Public Health, Health Systems, Social Policy Team, c2021.

About CoVaRR-Net

Coronavirus Variants Rapid Response Network (CoVaRR-Net) is a network of interdisciplinary researchers from institutions across the country created to assist in the Government of Canada's overall strategy to address the potential threat of emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants. Pillar Six of CoVaRR-Net studies the impacts of Coronavirus variants on public health, our healthcare system, and on social policy, and reports these findings to decision-makers and government officials.

CoVaRR-Net is funded by the
Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)



