

Title: COVID-19 Vaccination Policy	
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Department Human Resources	Review Frequency As required
Policy # 58	Resolution# 2022-223

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline organizational expectations with regards to COVID-19 immunization of employees, staff, council, first responders, contractors, volunteers, and students. The Township of Gillies is committed to maintaining the safety of the work environment for our employees, volunteers, Councillors and visitors.

Contingent upon vaccine availability, all eligible employees, staff, council, first responders, contractors, volunteers, and students are strongly encouraged to receive a full set of COVID-19 vaccines, including available boosters, unless the vaccine series contravenes their human rights based on one of the protected grounds prescribed in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

Due to their close involvement with the public, any member of the Township of Gillies Fire Department is not only encouraged to be fully vaccinated, they are also required to show proof of vaccination as a condition of employment or volunteer duty.

Background

This COVID-19 immunization policy aims to protect the Township of Gillies population including residents, employees, staff, council, first responders, contractors, volunteers, and students. The Township of Gillies acknowledges the present consensus of Canadian law and science that vaccination is the most effective measure to protect employees from COVID-19 infection.

COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It may be characterized by fever, cough, shortness of breath, and several other symptoms. Asymptomatic infection is also possible. The risk of severe disease increases with age but is not limited to the elderly and is elevated in those with underlying medical conditions.

Application of the Policy

Regardless of how often they are at Township of Gillies and how much time they spend there or in their respective workplace, this policy applies to:

- Employees, staff, council, and other workers that are, or may be in contact with the vulnerable population, the elderly and the general population as well as co-workers.
- First responders, including volunteer fire fighters, that are or may be in the patient environment including the vulnerable population, the elderly and the general population, as well as co-workers.
- students on an educational placement
- volunteers

Policy

It is important to protect the health and well-being of Township of Gillies's residents, employees, staff, council, first responders, contractors, volunteers, and students where there is evidence of a risk of COVID-19 along with identified measures for management. The Chief Minister of Health (CMOH) has directed Township of Gillies to develop, implement and ensure compliance with a COVID-19 vaccination policy. This policy establishes that the Township of Gillies supports a strong pro-vaccination culture, and encourages all employees to participate to the fullest extent by keeping up-to-date with boosters as they come available.

To facilitate this policy any representatives of the Township of Gillies, whether employees, Councillors, volunteers, students or other staff who, in the course of their duties, required to come into close contact with each other or members of the public are encouraged to provide to their employer proof of COVID-19 vaccine administration as per the following requirements:

- Proof of all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the World Health Organization, including any boosters required to maintain immunity

OR

- If the individual has not received the most recent booster dose in a COVID-19 vaccination series approved by the World Health Organization, proof that the previous doses have been administered and, as soon as reasonably possible, proof that they have received the remaining booster dose.
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Employees, staff, council, first responders, contractors, volunteers, and students may wish to provide updated proof of vaccination from time to time as vaccine directives about booster doses are updated by the CMOH.

If employees, volunteers, students or Council members are not willing or able to receive a full set of COVID-19 vaccines, then they are encouraged, in the course of their duties for the Township of Gillies, to take measures to protect themselves and their coworkers from their increased vulnerability, including:

- Attending meetings remotely
- Maintaining social distance if they insist on attending public gatherings
- Refraining from attending municipal facilities, where possible
- Using protective equipment such as masks and gloves when their work requires them to interact with coworkers and/or the public.

All employees, volunteers, students or Council members, regardless of vaccination status are permitted to take increased measures to limit contact, where possible given their Township of Gillies duties.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

All vaccination records will be securely stored, and no personal information will be shared with a third party without the individual's consent. There are however requirements of the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) under Directive #6 for the Township of Gillies to report statistical information to the OCMOH or the ministry. No identifying information will be provided to the ministry in relation to this policy; all statistical information will be provided in aggregate form.

Conflicts with the policy

Where there is a conflict between this policy and other legislation under Federal or Provincial law, the one that provides the most protection to employees, staff, council, first responders, contractors, volunteers, and students will apply. For example, if government restrictions are reinstated after this current period of suspension and they are more onerous than this policy, the government guidance is to be followed.

Mandate Specific to Fire Department

Due to their close involvement with the public, any member of the Township of Gillies Fire Department is not only encouraged to be fully vaccinated, but they are also required to show proof of vaccination as a condition of employment or volunteer duty.

To facilitate this policy any representatives of the Township of Gillies Fire Department, whether employees, volunteers, students or other staff are required to provide to the Clerk/Treasurer proof of COVID-19 vaccine administration as per the following requirements:

- Proof of all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the World Health Organization, including any boosters required to maintain immunity

OR

- If the individual has not received the most recent booster dose in a COVID-19 vaccination series approved by the World Health Organization, proof that the previous doses have been administered and, as soon as reasonably possible, proof that they have received the remaining booster dose.

Mutual Aid

The Township of Gillies has an agreement under Mutual Aid in relation to fire response. The Township of Gillies Council recognizes that its COVID-19 Vaccination Policy may be different than that of its Mutual Aid partners. Under the Mutual Aid agreement some communities include the unincorporated areas which are governed by the Province of Ontario. It is the understanding of Gillies Council that some of these same unincorporated areas do not have COVID-19 Vaccination Policies in place. Gillies Council also recognizes their responsibility to protect their employees, staff, first responders, contractors, volunteers, and students, as stated in this policy, and in an effort to mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID-19 the following conditions apply when responding to, or calling mutual aid:

- The Fire Chief for the Township of Gillies shall at all times work in cohorts to maintain physical distance of 2 metres from their mutual aid partners.

Exception – Superior North EMS

The Township of Gillies recognizes that Superior North EMS provides essential paramedic services to the residents of Gillies Township. Council recognizes that the COVID-19 Immunization Policy implemented by the City of Thunder Bay follows Directive 6 and is sufficient to help mitigate the potential spread and risk of contracting COVID-19 within the community.

Non-compliance with the policy

Any non-compliance with this policy by members of the Fire Department will result in unpaid leave from their duties, for the protection of the staff member or volunteer as well as the public.

Accommodation

The Ontario Human Rights Code position is that exempting individuals with a documented inability to receive the vaccine based on a protected ground is a reasonable accommodation within the meaning of the code. Proof of the grounds on which the exemption is claimed must be provided to the Clerk/Treasurer prior to the accommodation being granted.

The Township of Gillies will reimburse costs associated with antigen testing for individuals within the Fire Department who meet the human rights exemption requirement.

