



Chief Practitioner's COVID-19 UPDATE

Dr Meegan Crawford | Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

Dear parents, foster and kinship carers

From 1 am Monday the Queensland border has opened with a range of conditions dependant on a person's vaccination status and where they are travelling from. The opening of the border has been triggered by 80 per cent of Queenslanders now being fully vaccinated.

Health modelling suggests that with the border's opening, we can expect to see an increase in the number of Queenslanders infected with COVID-19. We know that with the protection of the COVID-19 vaccination the symptoms experienced should be milder for the majority of people vaccinated.

This means that COVID-19 vaccinations are now more important than ever and the Chief Health Officer is encouraging all Queenslanders over the age of 12 to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

It is our priority to do all we can to keep children in care safe and well, so it is crucial that they are vaccinated. To find the nearest vaccination location, go to www.covid19vaccine.qld.gov.au

As you will know, vaccinations are currently available for everyone aged 12 and over. In the new year, we will see younger children, aged 5 and over, also able to access the vaccine.

Many workplaces are now making vaccinations mandatory for staff and the Chief Health Officer has provided Public Health Directions outlining COVID-19 vaccination requirements for workers and visitors to high-risk settings, including schools, health facilities and youth detention centres. These directions will impact on departmental staff including the majority of child safety officers who will have to be vaccinated to undertake their roles in these high-risk settings.

I have recently contacted departmental staff requesting they do all that they can to have children and young people aged 12 and over vaccinated. As parents and carers, I hope someone has spoken to you about this plan. Please reach out to your child safety office if you have any questions.

While many parents and carers have been fully vaccinated, I know some parents, carers and young people themselves have expressed concern about the vaccine. If you have concerns, please visit the [Australian Government Department of Health website](http://www.health.gov.au) or the [Queensland Health website](http://www.health.qld.gov.au) for the information you need.

For most young people aged 12 and over, they will be able to consent to the vaccine themselves.



I wanted to share some information I have provided to departmental staff recently regarding consent for the vaccination so that you are fully informed about our department communication in regard to this important issue:

- **Consent** – Where a young person is capable of making an informed decision about their immunisation, this will be respected.
 - If there are concerns about a child's ability to consent themselves, their carer or residential care worker can sign a consent form on their behalf if they are subject to the Chief Executive's guardianship.
 - If a parent retains guardianship, they should sign this for the child (if the child cannot consent themselves) and if they are worried about the vaccine, arrange for them to discuss this with a GP.
 - If the parents retain guardianship and will not sign the consent form for children who cannot consent themselves, Child Safety will ask a health practitioner to administer the vaccine using the authority of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 97(3) ([Request to medically examine or treat a child – section 97](#)).
 - **Consent forms** for GPs and other Commonwealth-supported providers are [here](#), and for Qld Health vaccination hubs the consent forms are [here](#)
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services** – remember that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people may feel much more comfortable receiving their vaccine from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service.

As the safety of young people in care is our highest priority, the department's position is firm. **All young people should be vaccinated to keep them safe and healthy.** As parents and carers, and the people who are so very important to young people, I encourage you to assist with this and for yourself to be vaccinated.

Keep informed

We will continue to provide information on COVID-19 through:

- [Department website](#)
- Carer Connect app
- [Child and Family Queensland Facebook page](#)
- foster and kinship care service providers.

If you have any questions and need to talk to your Child Safety Officer, please email them in the first instance. Alternatively, you can call your child safety service centre or contact the Foster and Kinship Carer Support Line on 1300 729 309.

It's important that you continue to follow health advice to stay safe and well. For up-to-date Queensland COVID-19 information, please visit the [Queensland Health website](#).

Warm regards

Dr Meegan Crawford

Chief Practitioner

Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

