



Pandemic Policy – COVID-19

Document number: PO2020-018 Version 8

Approval

Policy owner	Executive Director, Corporate Services		
Approved by	Executive Leadership Team		
Date approved	08.07.2020	Review date	08.07.2022

Purpose

1. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (NSW) and the company titled the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (together the Society) are strongly committed to protecting the health and wellbeing of Society Personnel (including but not limited to members, volunteers, employees, contractors and consultants) and the people we assist.
2. The Society (and its officers and employees) are obliged to provide a work environment without risks to health and safety, as far as is reasonably practicable.
3. This policy sets out the Society's approach to requirements for Society Personnel to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and employee arrangements associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scope

4. This policy covers:
 - requirements for Society Personnel to be vaccinated against COVID-19, in order to work or enter Society facilities
 - requirements for others entering the Society's facilities, such as visitors, who may be required to be vaccinated as a condition of entry
 - the circumstances when Society Personnel are required to be absent from the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - working from home arrangements for employees who are able to conduct their work remotely during outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - leave arrangements for employees who:
 - are required to be absent from the workplace for a period of self-isolation or quarantine but cannot conduct their work remotely
 - cannot a workplace due to the effect of a public health order
 - are carers of children who are required to stay home from childcare or school
 - are carers of vulnerable individuals who are required to be absent from their ordinary place of work or residence
 - have existing health conditions that could make them particularly susceptible to COVID-19
 - contract COVID-19
 - are carers of family members who have contracted COVID-19.
5. This policy does not cover:
 - the work health and safety procedures that should be enacted during a pandemic (this information will be provided through regular bulletins issued by the WHS team in advance of an expected pandemic and during a pandemic)

- staffing arrangements to ensure that Vinnies Services, and in particular residential services, can continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic and possible outbreaks (this information will be provided through separate guidelines or business continuity plans).

Related policies and procedures

6. Related policies and procedures include:

- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Management Framework
- Leave Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Policy
- Privacy Policy.

COVID-19 vaccination requirements

7. Society Personnel who are required to be vaccinated by public health orders must meet these obligations. This includes, but is not limited to, those with roles in our:
- aged care services;
 - health services; and
 - disability services.
8. The Society has conducted risk assessments of business areas to inform decisions about requirements for Society Personnel to be vaccinated for COVID-19.
9. The following Society Personnel are required to be Fully Vaccinated with an Approved Vaccine by 1 December 2021 and to have recommended booster vaccinations as they become available:
- a. Society Personnel who work in our Retail and Logistics network.
10. The following Society Personnel are required to be Fully Vaccinated with an Approved Vaccine by 17 January 2022 and to have recommended booster vaccinations as they become available:
- a. Society Personnel in roles that support the provision of services to vulnerable individuals such as employees in Vinnies Services and in Membership support roles
 - b. Society Personnel in roles that require contact with the general public (other than those who work in our Retail and Logistics network who are required to be Fully Vaccinated by 1 December 2021)
 - c. Society Personnel in roles that involve any contact with any areas of the business that provide services to vulnerable individuals or have contact with the general public such as employees in the Office of the CEO, Mission and Spirituality, Finance or Corporate Services.

COVID-19 vaccination exemptions

11. Society Personnel may only be exempted from the above requirements with the approval of the CEO and upon providing suitable medical evidence and a completed medical contraindication form as prescribed by the NSW Government.
12. Society Personnel that do not meet the above requirements to be Fully Vaccinated for any reason may have their circumstances considered on a case-by-case basis, which may involve an individual risk assessment. Consideration may be given to:
 - a. whether alternative working arrangements can be put in place
 - b. frequency of contact with the general public or parts of the business that interact with the general public.
13. Only the CEO has the discretion to permit an unvaccinated employee or volunteer (who is otherwise required by this policy to be Fully Vaccinated) to attend a Society workplace or premises.
14. Only the State Council President has the discretion to permit an unvaccinated member (who is otherwise required by this policy to be Fully Vaccinated) to attend a Society workplace or premises.
15. Individuals given such permission must comply with any conditions or restrictions as determined by the CEO or the State Council President, including safety requirements such as personal protective equipment, masks and rapid antigen testing approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Breaches of policy

16. A refusal by an employee to comply with a requirement to be vaccinated under this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
17. A refusal by a volunteer to comply with a requirement to be vaccinated under this policy may result in the volunteer being unable to volunteer for a period or at all with the Society.
18. A refusal by a member to comply with a requirement to be vaccinated under this policy may result in a direction by the relevant President to not participate in face-to-face Conference activities.
19. The Society may require, as a condition of entry to any of its premises, that any person who visits its sites, premises or services (including for vulnerable individuals) is Fully Vaccinated.

Proof of vaccination

20. All Society Personnel required to be Fully Vaccinated must provide evidence acceptable to the Society of being Fully Vaccinated. The Society will accept for these purposes a copy of the person's Immunisation History Statement, or alternatively a copy of the person's COVID-19 Digital Certificate (both of which can be obtained through MyGov account). The document will be sighted by a nominated individual who will ensure a record of vaccination status is kept securely within the Society's record keeping systems.

21. As a condition of entry to any of the Society's premises, other persons (such as visitors) may be required to provide evidence acceptable to the Society of being Fully Vaccinated.

Storage of information

22. The Society takes the privacy of its personnel seriously and any medical records will be held in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).
23. Further information about how the Society deals with personal and health information generally can be found in the Society's Privacy Policy.
24. The Society will use the COVID-19 vaccination information to ensure health and safety in the workplace, assess any workplace adjustments, and to monitor and manage absences due to illness or injury.

Requirements to be absent from the workplace

25. Society Personnel will be required to be absent from the workplace for a period or subject to such testing requirements as recommended by NSW Health or this policy, if they:
 - are a close contact of a person confirmed to have COVID-19
 - have symptoms that could be early indicators of COVID-19, or any indications of feeling unwell.
26. Managers must ensure that any Society Personnel who present in the workplace or the Society's premises with symptoms that could be early indicators of a COVID-19, are required to leave the workplace or premises immediately.
27. An employee or volunteer who has been identified as a close contact of a person confirmed to have had COVID-19, must isolate for seven days. Prior to returning to the workplace they must have isolated for the seven days, have tested negative on Day 6 of the isolation period and have been asymptomatic for at least 24 hours.
28. An employee or volunteer who has tested positive to COVID-19 must isolate for seven days. If they wish to return to the workplace between 7 and 10 days post the positive test, they must have tested negative on Day 6 and be asymptomatic for at least 24 hrs. If they return 10 days after the positive result, they must be asymptomatic for at least 24 hrs. In either case management approval is required to return to work.

Working from home arrangements

29. The Society where possible will support working from home arrangements during any outbreak or where operations are impacted or disrupted by COVID-19. The Society will follow any NSW Government directions about working from home.
30. Subject to operational requirements, Executive Directors, the Chief Financial Officer and Directors may approve working from home arrangements for Society employees:
 - who are required to be absent from the workplace in self-isolation (with or without a positive COVID-19 result) and are able to conduct their work remotely
 - with known existing health conditions that could make them particularly susceptible to COVID-19

- with school-aged children or children in childcare should the NSW Government request that school-aged children or children in childcare stay home, or if schools are officially closed.
31. If a Society employee with children at home (school-aged children or children who are ordinarily in childcare) who is working from home cannot maintain their ordinary number of hours and has exhausted all available paid leave, the Society may consider a request for a temporary change to a part-time work arrangement, subject to operational requirements and safety considerations.
 32. A Society employee with children at home (school-aged children or children who are ordinarily in childcare) who cannot work from home and has exhausted all available paid leave, should discuss their situation with their relevant Executive Director or the Chief Financial Officer.

Leave arrangements for Society employees

33. A Society employee (permanent or maximum term, full-time or part-time) who is required to be absent from the workplace in self-isolation, but cannot undertake their work remotely, can access paid leave in the order outlined below:
 - a. **Special Leave:** An Executive Director or Chief Financial Officer may approve up to 10 working days of Special Leave.
 - b. **Existing Leave:** An employee may utilise any of their existing leave entitlements, including personal leave (sick or carer's leave); annual leave; long service leave or time off in lieu.
 - c. **Personal Leave in advance:** An employee who has exhausted the leave referred to above may take up to 10 days' personal leave in advance.
34. A Society employee (permanent or maximum term, full-time or part-time) who becomes ill as a result of non-work related COVID-19 or who is caring for a family member who has contracted COVID-19 should initially utilise their personal leave (sick or carer's leave) entitlements. If they have insufficient personal leave entitlements, they may access paid leave in the order outlined below:
 - a. **Existing Leave:** An employee may utilise any of their existing leave entitlements, including personal leave (sick or carer's leave); annual leave; long service leave or time off in lieu.
 - b. **Personal Leave in advance:** An employee who has exhausted the leave referred to above may draw down on up to 10 days' personal leave in advance.
 - c. **Special Leave:** If all other leave is exhausted, an Executive Director or the Chief Financial Officer may approve up to 10 working days of Special Leave.
35. A Society employee (permanent or maximum term, full-time or part-time) who becomes ill as a result of work related COVID-19 can access up to 10 working days of Special Leave, with Executive Director or Chief Financial Officer approval.

36. A Society employee with children at home (school-aged children or children who are ordinarily in childcare), who cannot work from home, or cannot maintain their ordinary number of hours, may access paid leave in the order outlined below:
 - a. **Existing Leave:** An employee may utilise any of their existing leave entitlements, including personal leave (sick or carer's leave), annual leave, long service leave or time off in lieu.
 - b. **Personal Leave in advance:** An employee who has exhausted the leave referred to above may take up to 10 days' personal leave in advance.
 - c. **Special Leave:** If all other leave is exhausted, an Executive Director or the Chief Financial Officer may approve up to 10 working days of Special Leave.
37. An employee (permanent or maximum term, full-time or part-time) who has drawn down on personal leave in advance, leaves the Society before the personal leave accrues, must reimburse the Society for this leave in advance, unless the CEO waives the requirement to reimburse this leave.
38. The Society will provide paid leave to full-time or part-time employees to be vaccinated (up to four hours on each occasion).
39. Full-time or part-time employees who cannot work because they are unwell after receiving a vaccination may access personal (sick) leave entitlements.

Public health order requirements may lead to the 'stand down' of employees

40. New South Wales Government Public Health Order requirements may require the Society to close some operations; may prevent some employees from travelling for the purposes of work; or may prevent employees from performing their roles if they are not vaccinated.
41. This may result in a stoppage of work leading to a situation where a Society employee cannot usefully be employed for reasons outside of the Society's control, or that the Society cannot reasonably be held responsible for.
42. In these circumstances, if no alternative duties can be performed at any location, the Society may stand an employee down from their role, without pay (including any public holidays).
43. Employees who are stood down may use available annual leave or long service leave during the stand down period (and be paid any public holidays owed during a period of paid leave).
44. Employees remain employed for the period of the stand down and may continue to accumulate leave entitlements during the period of any stand down.

Roles and responsibilities

45. All Society Personnel must comply with this policy.
46. Managers, Directors, Executive Directors and the Chief Financial Officer must:
 - ensure employees comply with this policy;
 - enable employees to access the leave provisions they are entitled to;

- maintain a safe workplace and monitor the wellbeing of employees;
- ensure that employees who are required to be absent from the workplace, are not in the workplace;
- notify the appropriate Safety and Wellbeing Partner if an employee contracts COVID or has attended a Society workplace after NSW Health has identified them to be a close contact of a person with COVID-19;
- provide flexibility to employees to enable them to meet any carer obligations; and
- support employees to work from home as agreed, subject to operational requirements.

Review

47. This policy and its implementation may be reviewed every two years, or on a needs basis as required to align with legislative or practice changes.
48. This policy does not form part of, and operates independently of, the employment agreement between the Society and any of its employees.

Further assistance

49. Society Personnel should speak with their Manager or the Executive Director, Corporate Services regarding any questions about the implementation of this policy.
50. Feedback regarding the implementation of this policy can be provided to the Executive Director, Corporate Services.

Approval and amendment history

	Approval authority	Date	Amendment summary
Doc # PO2020-018 Version 1	Executive Leadership Team	5 March 2020	New policy
Doc# PO2020-018 Version 2	Chief Executive Officer	12 March 2020	Minor amendments to make provisions clearer.
Doc# PO2020-018 Version 3	Executive Leadership Team	25 March 2020	Provisions in relation to leave for employees with pre-school or school-aged children added.
Doc# PO2020-018 Version 4	Chief Executive Officer	08 July 2020	Amendments primarily to ensure that Personnel do not return to work without a medical certificate.
Doc# PO2020-018 Version 5	Executive Director Corporate Services	30 July 2020	Updated ownership to align with organisational structure changes
Doc# PO2020-018 Version 6	Chief Executive Officer	20 September 2021	Amendments to include additional leave provisions if employees contract COVID-19 following a workplace exposure.
Doc# PO2020-018 Version 7	Chief Executive Officer	2 November 2021	Amendment to simplify and streamline and to include COVID-19 vaccination requirements.
Doc# PO2020-018 Version 8	Chief Executive Officer	17 February 2022	Amendment to update isolation requirements and clarify Special Leave arrangements.

Appendix 1: Definitions

51. Relevant definitions include:

Term in Bold	Definition
Approved Vaccine	Any COVID-19 vaccination that have been provisionally registered for use in Australia by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer of the Society.
Close contact	As determined and notified by the NSW government.
Fully Vaccinated	Having obtained the manufacturer's recommended dosage of any Approved Vaccine. For example, where a two-dose schedule is recommended by the manufacturer, a person will be considered fully vaccinated when they have received both doses of the vaccine.
Pandemic	Described by the World Health Organisation as the worldwide spread of a new disease.
Personal Leave	Sick or carer's leave.
Recognised Contraindication	A reaction to an Approved Vaccine that is recognised by the manufacturer of that vaccine.
Self-isolation	Self-imposed or medically advised isolation and self-monitoring as a precaution or as a result of potential (e.g.travel), suspected or confirmed contact with the coronavirus.
Special Leave	An additional leave entitlement available under this policy.
Society Personnel	Any person (or group of people) employed or engaged by the Society to assist in its works such as employees, contractors and consultants. In addition it covers members and volunteers.
Vaccination	Treatment with a vaccine to produce immunity against a disease for the benefit of individuals and the community.