

The logo for the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) features the lowercase letters 'ahla' in a bold, white, sans-serif font.The logo for the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) features four vertical white bars of varying heights, positioned to the left of the text.

ALBERTA HOTEL &  
LODGING ASSOCIATION

# WORKPLACE VACCINATION POLICIES IN ALBERTA

## A Hotel Employer's Guide

*Developed and distributed by the Alberta  
Hotel and Lodging Association.*

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## Introduction

The Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) strongly recommends that all hotel and convention centres in Alberta take every reasonable measure possible to support workers in receiving a full dose of the [COVID-19 vaccination](#). Further to this, the AHLA encourages hotel employers to develop and implement a workplace vaccination policy for their employees and workforce, and that all those eligible to receive a complete series of the COVID-19 vaccine get one.

Supporting employees to [get fully vaccinated](#) is the best way to help protect them from the risks of COVID-19, prevent outbreaks, and build confidence in the health and safety of the workplace.

This guide has been developed in conjunction with Alberta public health restrictions, Alberta occupational health and safety, and recommendations by the Government of Alberta. The overall goal is to support hotels in Alberta in returning to normal business operations in the safest manner possible.

**Please note:** *While strongly encouraged, these recommendations are voluntary, and are not intended to be legally enforceable. The information provided in this document does not contain legal advice and should not be relied on or treated as legal advice. Workplaces should seek their own legal advice to address their specific circumstances.*

## Developing a Workplace Vaccination Policy

To protect employees and guests, employers should continuously assess the risk of disease transmission at the workplace by considering the following:

- Are workers required to be in close contact with others in their place of work or while performing their work duties?
- Can workers keep at least two metres apart while performing their work?
- How long and how often are workers in close contact with other workers or customers?
- Does your workplace have physical barriers (when workers cannot keep distance from each other), good ventilation, and personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks, to protect workers or patrons?
- What is the size of your workforce and does your workforce have a high vaccination rate?
- Does the workplace have workers or clients who may be at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 or are unable to be vaccinated? Some people may have reduced immunity due to age, pre-existing health conditions, or medical treatments.
- Is the workplace able to offer alternative work for people who require accommodation, such as the ability to work remotely?

# Key Components of a Vaccination Policy

There are many components to a workplace vaccination policy. Below are points employers should consider as part of the development and implementation of such a policy:

## 1) Continued adherence to public health guidelines

- Vaccines prevent against serious illness and death—they reduce but do not fully prevent individuals from transmitting or contracting COVID-19.
- Vaccines do not replace the need for strict adherence to established COVID-19 public health measures, especially when interacting with others whose vaccination status may be unknown.
- Employers must continue to implement all COVID-19 prevention measures for their sector, as outlined by provincial guidelines.
- There may be individuals who cannot receive the vaccine due to a medical exemption. Most individuals are able to safely receive the vaccine series, and a vaccinated workplace helps to protect those who are medically unable to be vaccinated. Employees who are hesitant about getting immunized should be encouraged to [get accurate information about vaccination](#) from their physician or other reliable sources.

## 2) Determine the scope and purpose of the policy

- Outline the reason for the policy, including the risks of COVID-19. Vaccination is one of the best ways to protect staff and guests from becoming seriously ill or transmitting the virus to others. Studies show that COVID variants are more contagious, with greater risk for severe outcomes and hospitalization.
- Identify who the policy applies to. Consider if the policy will apply to all workers, as well as contractors, volunteers, and anyone else who enters the property for work purposes. Consider whether the policy will apply to any employees who are working from home to reduce the risk of workplace transmission and limit absences.
- Consider how implementing or not implementing a workplace vaccination policy could affect your business and employee schedules. If your hotel has an event space, some patrons may request that all staff working the event are vaccinated.
- Explain that the policy may evolve as the pandemic situation changes or legislation and public health advice is altered.
- Develop a clear communications plan to inform workers about the policy.

### 3) List actions workers must take

- Workplace policies should require workers to provide proof of vaccination status, with vaccines approved by Health Canada or the World Health Organization, as outlined by provincial guidance.
- The policy should indicate where employees can provide proof of vaccination while also addressing privacy concerns.
- The policy should also include documentation requirements for unvaccinated employees, for example:
  - **A medical exemption form** that indicates the person has a legitimate medical exemption, including if the reasons are temporary or permanent. *See the [Alberta Covid-19 Immunization Medical Exemption Policy](#) and the [Sample Medical Exemption Request form](#) located in Appendix 2 of this handbook.*
  - **A religious exemption form** should be filled out by the employee, accompanied by a letter from the person's religious leader stating the religious reason for the exemption. *See the [Sample Religious Exemption form](#) located in Appendix 3 of this handbook.*
  - **A privately paid negative COVID-19 test (PCR) taken within the past 72 hours.**

### 4) Set deadlines

Determine a reasonable date when workers must demonstrate compliance with the entirety or elements of the vaccination policy. For example, this can include a set date for when first and second doses are required.

### 5) List available supports for vaccination

It is important for employers to demonstrate and be committed to supporting workers to get vaccinated, such as providing employees with paid time off to get their vaccine.

All employees covered by the Employment Standards Code can access [up to 3 hours of paid leave from their employer to get each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine](#) without fear of penalty, loss of pay, or reprisal.

Employers may provide additional time beyond 3 hours per appointment, if necessary, but are not required to.

The leave applies to all full-time and part-time employees covered by Alberta's Employment Standards Code, regardless of how long they have been employed.

Visit the [AHLA's website](#) for more information and ways to support workers in receiving their full vaccination.

## 6) Non-compliance

Employers should include procedures in the policy for those who voluntarily choose not to get vaccinated. This could include but is not limited to:

- Consider if workers can be relocated or if modified work or reassignments may be possible. If this is not possible, consider if unvaccinated workers may use vacation or unpaid leave until it is safe for them to return to the workplace.
- Require employees who decline to be vaccinated for any other reason, which is not part of an accommodation request, to provide proof of COVID-19 free status (for example, twice weekly) by providing a privately paid negative COVID-19 test (PCR) within the past 72 hours. It should be the employee's responsibility to obtain and provide this test.
- Have employees participate in a [vaccination education course](#) with a signed declaration stating that they have reviewed and understood the content.
- The vaccination education course should at a minimum include information on:
  - How the COVID-19 vaccines work
  - Vaccine safety related to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines
  - The benefits of vaccination against COVID-19
  - Risks of not being vaccinated against COVID-19
  - Possible side effects of COVID-19 vaccination
  - The potential consequences for workers who do not fulfill the requirements of the policy

## 7) Make accommodations

Employers have a [duty to accommodate](#) persons with a disability, medical condition, or another relevant protected ground, such as religious beliefs. Your policy should include a procedure for instances where an employee is not be able to receive a vaccination due to qualified medical or religious reasons. [Personal preference is not a protected ground under the Alberta Human Rights Act.](#)

Be sure the policy clearly states what exemption request forms and supporting documents are required. Examples are:

- Medical note from the person's doctor that clearly states the medical reasons for not being able to receive a vaccine
- A letter from the person's religious leader with clear stated reasons

## 8) Privacy considerations

- The policy should reflect that information about an employee's vaccination status is subject to applicable privacy law.

- The policy should outline how vaccination status of employees may be used by their employer to mitigate the health-related risks of COVID-19.
- In the event of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace, knowing the status of vaccination for employees will be important to help take appropriate action quickly to help protect workers, their families, and the community. This can include sharing the information with Alberta Public Health.
- Limit the collection, use, disclosure, and retention of information to what is reasonably necessary. Keep worker vaccination information separate from their personnel file.
- Develop a plan to safeguard employees' personal information and ensure vaccination status records are retained, accessed, and disposed of in a secure manner.

#### 9) Staff contact

- Identify an individual in your organization that employees may contact with questions about the policy or privacy concerns, to request accommodations, or for information on how to comply with the policy. This could be Human Resources, the property General Manager, or another designated manager in the organization.

## Other Considerations

### WCB

Implementing a workplace vaccination policy can help slow the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and reduce the number of COVID-19 related WCB claims, in turn lowering your WCB annual premiums.

#### COVID-19 Claims

WCB covers employees who contract COVID-19 at their workplace. WCB adjudicators will ask numerous questions to try to establish the hazard as being work-related. The first step is to have a declared outbreak at the employer's location or a cluster of infections where work could be the source. Once a claim is submitted, adjudicators will ask the workers about who they were in direct contact with, living conditions, commuting into work, and look for any other sources of infection. The answers to these questions will determine if the claim is accepted or not.

#### Adverse Reactions

WCB will accept claims for adverse reactions to the vaccine if the employer is mandating it. Claims will not be accepted if they fall under the list of common [side effects](#) (i.e., headaches, brain fog, fatigue, and fever).

## Staff Accommodations

Another reason you may want to implement a workplace vaccination policy is if you have staff accommodations at your property. Staff accommodations without a mandatory vaccine policy in place puts workers at a higher risk for contracting and spreading COVID-19. Visit the [Alberta Health Services Guidelines](#) for controlling and managing outbreaks at work camps and worksites.



# Appendix 1: Sample Workplace Vaccination Policy

Policy Name:	Workplace COVID-19 Vaccinations	Policy Number:	
Category:	Health and Safety	Effective Date:	
Applicability:	Insert hotel name here	Revision Date:	

**Policy:**

This policy applies to all employees, tenants, contractors and suppliers of/to "insert hotel name here" ("Company") who are required to service or enter any of the areas of the hotel covered under Alberta's Restrictions Exemption Program ("Program"). Under the Program, "insert hotel name here" is a single business and the exemption extends to the entire hotel's operations.

With current legislation to protect the guests and our hotel employees from COVID-19 variants, it will be mandatory for all employees to have received their full vaccination. Exceptions for those that require accommodation will be provided. The safety of our employees is our top priority, and this policy is in place to protect all employees and members of the general public from COVID-19.

**Procedures:**

The Company will require all employees to provide proof of their vaccination status with a COVID-19 vaccination approved for use by the Alberta government/Public Health Authority, by this date: "MM/DD/YYYY". Should an employee not be able to receive a vaccination due to qualified medical or religious reasons, they must speak to their Manager and/or Human Resources leader to determine whether reasonable accommodations are available and obtain the appropriate exemption request form.

In providing confirmation of vaccination status, employees will not be required to disclose any other medical information, disability-related information, or genetic information. The information collected by the Company will be used for the purposes of administering the Company's COVID-19 policies and mitigation measures, for contact tracing purposes after a potential exposure, and to help ensure a safe work environment. The Company will keep each employee's status confidential in accordance with "insert hotel name here" Company's Privacy Policy and applicable law; only those managers with a business need to know an employee's vaccination status will have access to this information. The Company may request that an employee provide proof of their vaccination status at any time, should it be required for business-related reasons. Should proof of vaccination status be requested, it will be submitted directly to Human Resources or hotel management.

Should an accommodation be required as indicated above, please contact " ". An Exemption Request Form must be completed, including written proof of a medical reason from a physician or nurse practitioner that includes whether the reason is permanent or time-limited. For religious accommodation, written proof of religion by applicable clergy must be provided. All accommodations must be approved by " ".

Should an employee decline to be vaccinated for any other reason that is not part of an accommodation request, they will be required to provide proof of COVID-19 free status, by providing a privately paid negative COVID-19 test (PCR) taken within the previous 72 hours. It will be the employee's responsibility to obtain and provide this test. Failure to do so will result in the employee being unable to work their shift, without pay, until they provide such proof of negative COVID-19 status.

For those who are unvaccinated due to an approved accommodation as indicated above, they will be required, among other measures, to undergo PCR testing at regular intervals, and provide the Company with negative test results.

The Company reserves the right to modify, amend, or terminate this Policy, in its sole discretion, at any time.

*The AHLA recommends that this policy be reviewed annually and amended as needed. To download this document in Word document format, click here*

## Appendix 2: Sample Medical Exemption Request Form

In Alberta, a vaccine medical exemption letter must be written by a physician or nurse practitioner and must include the following:

- Name of the individual to whom the exemption applies (should include their address)
- Name, phone number, contact information, professional registration number, and signature of the authorizing health professional
- Date on which the written confirmation was provided
- Length of time the exemption is valid (up to one year from the date on which written confirmation was provided)

Sample Statement of Medical Exemption  
COVID-19 Immunization- Public Use

Review the [COVID-19 Immunization Medical Exemption Policy](#) prior to certifying a medical exemption to ensure all criteria are met.

Section 1 – Individual Information

Last Name		First Name		DOB (yyyy/mm/dd)
Home Address				
Unit Number	Street Number	Street Name		PO Box
City/Town		Province		Postal Code

Section 2 – Declaration of Physician or Registered Nurse in the Extended Class (Nurse Practitioner)

I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
(Name of physician or registered nurse in the extended class)

certify that, for medical reasons, the above named individual is unable to receive a COVID- 19 immunization with the current COVID-19 vaccines available in Alberta (*Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine*).

Selection	Condition and/or Adverse Event Following Immunization
1. Pre-existing Condition(s)	
	Severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to a component of a COVID-19 vaccine
	Myocarditis prior to initiating a mRNA COVID-19 vaccine series (individuals aged 12-17 years old)
2. Contraindications to Initiating a AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 Vaccine Series	
	History of capillary leak syndrome (CLS)
	History of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) with thrombocytopenia
	History of heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT)
	History of major venous and/or arterial thrombosis with thrombocytopenia following any vaccine

3. Adverse Events Following COVID-19 Immunization

	Severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis following a COVID-19 vaccine
	Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS)/Vaccine-Induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT) following the Astra Zeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine
	Myocarditis or Pericarditis following a mRNA COVID-19 vaccine
	Serious adverse event following immunization (e.g. results in hospitalization, persistent or significant disability/incapacity)

4. Other

	Actively receiving monoclonal antibody therapy OR convalescent plasma therapy for the treatment or prevention of COVID-19
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Section 3 - Length of Exemption

Permanent					
Time limited	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">From</td> <td style="width: 50%;">To</td> </tr> <tr> <td>yyyy/mm/dd</td> <td>yyyy/mm/dd</td> </tr> </table>	From	To	yyyy/mm/dd	yyyy/mm/dd
From	To				
yyyy/mm/dd	yyyy/mm/dd				

Section 4 - Signature

Business Address

Unit Number	Street Number	Street Name	PO Box
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City/Town	Province	Postal Code
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Signature of Physician or Registered Nurse in the Extended Class	Designation	Date (yyyy/mm/dd)
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## Appendix 4: Sample Vaccine Tracking Sheet

Employee name	Proof of vaccine collected	Accommodation requested	Exemption request form/ Accompanying letter from a physician or religious leader	Additional notes
Amal Clooney	Yes			
Amy Adams	Yes			
Ben Affleck	No	Yes	Yes	
Christina Aguilera	No	Yes	No	Placed on a temporary leave without pay
Jennifer Aniston	Yes			
Lance Armstrong	Yes			

### Tips:

- Create a tracking sheet using an excel spreadsheet.
- Alphabetize the names for easy tracking.
- Use the "AB Covid Records Verifier App" and scan employees QR codes—you can download the verifier app through [Google Play](#) or [Apple App store](#).
- It is not recommended to keep copies of employees proof of vaccination cards, but all other accompanying documents such as “exemption request forms” should be stored in a separate file outside of the employee's file.
- Ensure all documents are dated.
- Ensure documents are kept in a safe and secure place.

## Appendix 5: Vaccine Policy FAQ

### **Q. Can my employer implement a COVID-19 vaccination policy?**

**A.** Yes. Under the occupational health and safety regime in each Canadian jurisdiction, employers have a duty to protect employees from work-related illness or injury. To fulfill this duty, employers must take certain precautions to meet minimum health and safety standards, which can include policies to limit the spread of infectious diseases.

In the context of COVID-19, if the presence of an unvaccinated employee presents a threat to the health and safety of persons in the workplace, employers may be within their right to require vaccination as a condition of returning to, or remaining in, the workplace, absent a valid medical or religious reason for not being vaccinated.

### **Q. Can my employer force me to get the vaccine?**

**A.** Employers will not be permitted to force employees to be vaccinated against their will, but rather, to impose restrictions on employees who refuse the vaccine. For instance, an employer may direct an employee who refuses the vaccine to work remotely (where possible) or take a leave of absence without pay. In some cases, employees who refuse the vaccine without a valid medical or religious reason may face disciplinary action or dismissal.

### **Q. Can my employer ask for proof of vaccination? What about privacy laws?**

**A.** Employers will be permitted to request proof of vaccination from employees. However, privacy laws require that the information collected from employees be used and stored purely to serve the narrow purpose of the vaccination policy.

### **Q. Can my employer discipline or fire me if I refuse to get the vaccine?**

**A.** Most likely. In the past, blanket policies requiring that all employees be vaccinated on the threat of discipline or dismissal have generally been deemed unreasonable in the context of the seasonal flu. While this suggests that it is important for a policy to be non-disciplinary to be reasonable, arbitrators will very likely view COVID-19 as being more serious than the flu and may be willing to accept more serious consequences for employees. After all, COVID-19 is much more infectious and deadlier than the seasonal flu, with evidence that the vaccine is 95% effective—a stark difference when compared to the flu shot, which ranges between 40%-60% effectiveness. An employer's right to discipline or fire an employee for refusing to comply with the vaccine policy may be limited where the policy explicitly states that the employer will take a "non-disciplinary" approach to enforcing the policy.

### **Q. What if I have a medical condition that makes the vaccine unsafe?**

**A.** Human rights legislation imposes a duty on employers to accommodate employees who cannot comply with workplace policies due to medical conditions or disabilities. To fulfill that duty, employers must make efforts to provide an accommodation that is reasonable in the circumstances, unless it would cause "undue hardship." Undue hardship can arise if an

accommodation would be too costly, burdensome, or if it would compromise the health and safety of other employees. What constitutes reasonable accommodation and undue hardship will depend on the specific circumstances of each case. For instance, if an employee with a valid claim for accommodation can complete their work remotely, a work-from-home accommodation may be reasonable. On the other hand, if the employee's tasks must be completed in the workplace, such as the case with most hotel employees, the same accommodation may cause undue hardship. An employee will need to provide the employer with proof of disability from a medical professional to support their accommodation request.

**Q. What if I can't take the vaccine because of my religion?**

**A.** Likewise, employers also must accommodate employees whose sincerely-held religious beliefs prevent them from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, unless doing so would cause undue hardship. As with disabled employees, an employer must accommodate the employee unless it would cause undue hardship. An employee will need to support their accommodation request by providing the employer with verification of the nature of their religious belief, proof of long-standing practice, and verification from their spiritual leader. A singular belief against vaccinations or COVID vaccines in particular does not amount to a religion or creed under human rights legislation. Similarly, beliefs about the safety or efficacy of COVID vaccines or the dangers of COVID-19 are not creeds.

**Q. What if I am worried about the vaccine due to pregnancy?**

**A.** Those who refuse the vaccine due to pregnancy will most likely not be granted human rights protections absent medical complications that preclude them from being vaccinated. Evidence about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy has been growing. Data now suggests that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy. Data also suggests that pregnant and recently pregnant people are more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant people.

**Q. What if the employer cannot provide an accommodation?**

**A.** If the employer can prove that vaccination is necessary for all employees and that accommodation is not possible without undue hardship, then it would be lawful for the employer to exclude an employee from the workplace even if they have a valid claim for human rights protections. This does not mean that the employer can automatically dismiss the employee. Rather, the employer will likely be permitted to temporarily place the employee on a leave of absence until the pandemic is contained.

**Q. What if I don't want the vaccine for other reasons?**

**A.** Human rights legislation will not protect employees who refuse the vaccine based on personal preference or other reasons not covered by human rights legislation. Employees who refuse the vaccine, absent a valid human rights reason, may be placed on an unpaid leave, be disciplined, or be dismissed.



**Q. What if I have an adverse reaction to the vaccine?**

**A.** Data strongly supports that vaccine injuries are extremely rare. In any event, the Federal Government's Vaccine Injury Support Program provides financial support to those who experience a no-fault "serious and permanent injury" after receiving a vaccine. For employees with short-term injuries, it seems likely that an adverse reaction may be compensable under workers' compensation regimes if the employee was vaccinated after being required to do so by their employer as a condition of continued employment.

**Q. If I'm placed on an unpaid leave of absence after refusing the vaccine will I be eligible for Employment Insurance?**

**A.** Most likely not. Employees who to take an unpaid leave of absence after deciding not to receive the vaccine will not be considered unemployed and will be ineligible for EI.

**Q: Does WCB cover employees who get COVID-19 even after they've been vaccinated as a result of a mandatory workplace vaccine policy?**

**A:** WCB would cover any staff who got COVID-19 as a result of the workplace. Whether they have a vaccine or not would not be a factor in their decision.

**Q: When there is a mandatory vaccine policy in place, what happens if an employee has an adverse reaction to the vaccine and makes a claim with WCB?**

**A:** WCB will accept claims for adverse reactions to the vaccine if the employer is mandating it. However, they will not accept side effects (e.g. aches, fatigue, fever, etc.).

**Q: Will COVID-19 related claims increase the employer's premiums and affect claims costs?**

**A:** WCB is still providing 100% cost relief on COVID-19 accepted claims, so it will not impact an employer's premiums directly.

**Q: How does WCB determine that the employee contracted COVID-19 at work and not due to behavior outside of work?**

**A:** WCB adjudicators ask numerous questions to try to establish the hazard as being work-related. The first step is to have a declared outbreak at the employer's location or a cluster of infections where work could be the source. Once a claim comes in, then WCB will ask the worker about who they were in direct contact with, living conditions, commuting into work, or any other possible sources of infection. The answers to the questions will determine whether WCB accepts the claim or not.

## Appendix 6: Additional Supports for Hotels

- [Rapid test program](#)
- [AHLA Website](#)
- [ASAP Designation](#)

This guide is for example purposes only. Following this guide alone will not necessarily put you in compliance with the legislation. It is important and necessary that you customize this document to meet the unique circumstances of your worksite. Further, it is essential that this handbook is used, communicated, and implemented in accordance with the legislation. The Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA), its agents, employees, or contractors will not be liable to you for any damages, direct or indirect, arising out of your use of this handbook.

For questions about this guide, please contact the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association.

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