

Information for Employers new to the Vaccinating Health Worker (VHW) role

Have you recently employed a VHW or are you looking to include a VHW on your vaccinating team? This information sheet will give you an understanding about the VHW role and what your responsibilities are to support this vaccinating role.

About the VHW role

The VHW role prepares pharmacy technicians, community health care workers, healthcare assistants and kaiāwhina to prepare and/or administer a range of vaccines after completing a training programme, assessment and gaining authorisation.

There are two stages to the VHW role:

Stage 1: VHWs will be able to administer COVID-19 (Pfizer) and the influenza vaccines to people 12 years and over and vaccines for Human Papillomavirus (HPV9) and Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (whooping cough) (Tdap) for people 11 years and over.

Stage 2: VHWs will be able to prepare and administer all vaccines outlined in Stage 1, including administering COVID-19 (Pfizer) and influenza to people 5 years and over, and also MMR for people 5 years and over.

VHWs need to be authorised by Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand and have gained experience as a Stage 1 VHW before gaining access to VHW Stage 2 training.

The VHW operating model is a team-based approach. VHWs work under the clinical supervision and direction of a registered health professional who is an authorised vaccinator, provisional vaccinator, or pharmacist vaccinator.

The VHW cannot obtain informed consent from the consumer - this must be performed by a registered health professional onsite.

What do employers need to do?

If you have recently employed an authorised VHW or are looking at employing a Stage 1 or 2 VHW there are three things you must consider:

1. Authorisation

The VHW you have employed or a looking to employ will be authorised Stage 1 or Stage 2 with limits on which vaccines they can administer and specific age ranges for the people they can vaccinate. It is your responsibility to ensure they are vaccinating within the scope of the authorisation.

You should:

1. Request a copy of their authorisation letter which lists the vaccines they have been authorised to administer and to what age range.
2. Confirm authorisation is valid and up to date.
3. Check to see whether they are authorised for the vaccines your vaccination service delivers.
4. Support the VHW to complete any further training requirements and get authorised by Te Whatu Ora via the [online portal](#).

2. Training

Check in with your VHW and see where they are on the VHW learning pathway. Understand what training they are yet to complete and support them in achieving this.

The training covers a range of core learning topics mainly provided by you, as their employer, and vaccine-specific training provided by the Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC).

You can get an overview of the training for this role by checking out the Vaccinating Health Worker: [Capability Matrix](#).

The vaccine specific training includes:

- A series of online courses which can be delivered in a group setting, using the online content, or as a face-to-face workshop facilitated by IMAC. Please contact your local IMAC team member to explore this option.
www.immune.org.nz/our-team-immunisation-advisory-centre
- Face-to-face practical workshops at each stage
- Observation and assessments in the workplace under the guidance of an authorised vaccinator with a minimum of two years vaccinating experience.

Core learning topics include:

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi, cultural awareness, and engaging effectively with Māori
- Working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Working with people with disabilities
- Working with people experiencing mental health and addiction needs
- Communicating and interpersonal relationships
- Health and safety, personal protection equipment (PPE), and infection prevention and control (IPC)
- Privacy/confidentiality
- Health information/health literacy.

It is your responsibility as an employer to either deliver this core learning or enable access to it, as outlined above.

Some of these modules such as Infection Prevention and Control and supporting those with disabilities are also available on the IMAC Learning website as separate courses.

It is expected that the VHW will have at least completed training on privacy and health information/health literacy before attending the practical workshop.

As an employer you will also ensure your employee(s) complete basic life support (CPR) and Immunisation Register training eg. Aotearoa Immunisation Register (AIR) and/or COVID-19 Immunisation Register (CIR).

The vaccine specific training material has been developed by IMAC.

Access to this training is available through the [IMAC Learning Management System](#) (LMS).

Once the VHW has completed their online training you will register the VHW for a practical workshop with IMAC.

On successful completion of the practical workshop the VHW will receive a workbook that they need to complete with their clinical supervisor.

3. Clinical supervision

VHWs don't work on their own. They join a team and require an experienced and capable registered health professional providing on site clinical supervision and direction.

As a VHW Clinical Supervisor, they will need to:

- be a New Zealand registered healthcare professional
- be a fully authorised vaccinator, provisional vaccinator or pharmacist vaccinator
- have relevant, recent vaccination experience
- have been nominated as a suitable candidate to be a supervisor by you as their employer
- have completed VHW supervisor training (this is highly recommended).

There is a 1:6 ratio of VHW Clinical Supervisor to VHW for administering vaccines and a 1:1 ratio for preparing multi dose vials. As the employer you are responsible to maintain these ratios in each vaccinating space the VHW is working.

Note: The VHW Clinical Supervisor is different to the Practical Assessor. The Practical Assessor must be an authorised vaccinator or Pharmacist Vaccinator with a minimum of six months' vaccinating experience.

Other Employer responsibilities

Employers are ultimately accountable for service delivery, quality and safety.

This includes:

- supporting the VHW to complete the core learning requirements by either delivering the core learning requirements or enabling access to courses
- ensuring VHW clinical supervisors have appropriate knowledge on the scope of the VHW
- ensuring that the VHWs attend and complete any required upskilling education and training
- retaining up to date training records for VHWs, including authorisation and basic life support (CPR), to ensure these are valid at all times of practice
- ensure there is a standing order in place to allow the VHW to complete their assessments in the workplace
- ensuring VHW are appropriately trained and authorised and are working under clinical supervision by a registered health professional
- ensure VHW are included in handovers and clinical updates to keep their vaccination knowledge current

Employers must ensure the daily staff profile:

- includes the required experience, skills and qualifications
- matches expected consumer needs and the constraints of the site arrangements.

Employers are expected to ensure that all VHW and VHW Clinical Supervisors have indemnity insurance. (This is highly recommended.)

Resources to support employers

Resources will be available to support employers to take on board this new health workforce.

We suggest you regularly check the:

[Vaccinating workforce webpage](#) which also has links to the Information Sheets on 'Becoming a Vaccinating Health Worker' and 'Vaccinating Health Worker Clinical Supervisors'

[IMAC webpage](#) for training information

[Capability Matrix](#)