

POSITION STATEMENT ON COVID-19 VACCINATION & HEALTH CARE WORKERS

The Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM) and the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) are the national organizations representing midwifery in Canada. CAM's vision is "equitable access to excellent sexual, reproductive & newborn midwifery services for everyone". CAM's values are Responsibility, Equity, Integrity and Respect. Our intended impact and values guide our work and advocacy. Canadian and Indigenous midwives are trusted health leaders who play a significant role in primary health care delivery and help optimize health outcomes for families.

The evidence is clear that vaccines are safe, and vaccination helps to prevent the morbidity/mortality of COVID-19 infection. **We support vaccination against COVID-19 and recommend that all midwives get vaccinated.**

We believe that for a vaccination policy to be meaningful and useful it must take into consideration individual, community, provincial, territorial, and national needs. As we consider the reality of mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for health care workers, we see the opportunity to call for an approach grounded in our midwifery values and principles, which considers equity, informed choice, respectful dialogue, and an evidence-based approach to addressing vaccine uptake.

Responsibility: *we are accountable to our communities, and to everyone we work and partner with*

Our primary responsibility as midwives is to the health and safety of our clients, our communities, and our colleagues. COVID-19 has and will continue to have a major impact on health care delivery in Canada for the foreseeable future and vaccination has been identified by strong scientific evidence as an important measure to protect clients, communities, midwives, the wider health workforce, and health care systems capacity.

Pregnant people are at high risk of complications should they contract COVID-19 including admission to intensive care, invasive ventilation, premature birth, and death¹. These risks are increased for those >35, and those with asthma, obesity, pre-existing diabetes and/or hypertension, as well as heart disease. Pregnant people are also more vulnerable due to lower rates of vaccine uptake generally², and COVID-19 vaccine uptake specifically³. It is our responsibility to ensure we are doing everything we can to safeguard our clients. As midwives we also have a responsibility to show leadership to the wider community to promote trust and protect public health to the best of our ability.

Equity: *we work to eliminate policies, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race*

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted BIPOC, low income/working class communities in Canada. Vaccinations can help lessen this impact. Efforts should be made to ease access and remove barriers to vaccination. This includes navigating barriers in the form of language, access to technology to book appointments, childcare, and securing time off work. This also means recognizing Canada's ongoing colonial legacy and racist, ableist, classist policies that our health systems are built on and understanding how this promotes a lack of trust in medical institutions. We advocate for community-led vaccine acceptance initiatives that work to combat historical and ongoing trauma. We recognize vaccination policies may further perpetuate inequities in our systems. Equity does not mean treating everyone the same and the details of these policies make the difference⁴.

We advocate for the collection of disaggregated demographic data on COVID-19 transmission, outcomes, and vaccination rates to reveal disparities and allow us to address them.

¹ https://sogc.org/common/Uploaded%20files/Covid%20Information/EN_HCP-FAQ_SOGC_FINAL.pdf

² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201110/dq201110a-eng.htm>

³ <https://www.bornontario.ca/en/whats-happening/resources/Documents/COVID-19-Vaccination-During-Pregnancy-in-Ontario-Report-1---FINAL.pdf>

⁴ https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCOHRC_Jul2021_Vaccination-Policy-Guidance_FINAL.pdf

Integrity: *we conduct our work ethically and with honesty, transparency, and wholeness*

CAM has partnered with the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop free materials to support informed choice discussion on vaccination⁵. We encourage all midwives to access these resources to guide their approach to immunization discussion and policy creation.

CAM recognizes that mandatory vaccine policies that do not provide options or take into consideration local needs and circumstances are not the most effective way to provide informed choice, and to some, may be experienced as coercive. Strict mandatory vaccine policies can disproportionately penalize BIPOC, low income and working-class communities, decreasing their economic security and increasing their vulnerability.

CAM encourages healthcare administrators and midwifery practices to consider logistical issues as they relate to mandatory vaccination and its impact on the workforce and develop contingency plans. We recognize that issues of burnout and attrition may be compounded by mandatory vaccination policies which result in decreased staffing. Local needs, resources and transmission rates should be considered in policy development. Blanket policies often have unintended consequences that are not obvious to decision-makers.

Respect: *we treat people and expect to be treated in a positive, dignified manner that acknowledges people for who they are and for their contributions*

We seek to support health care workers to approach conversations with vaccine hesitant colleagues and clients in a productive and respectful way. No one should experience harassment for offering vaccination, or for declining it. We believe that respectful communication around vaccination is the best way to move forward together.

See Also:

- [Midwifery Care, Immunization and Informed Choice](#)
- [Midwifery Immunization Communication](#)
- [Vaccines, We Can Talk About It](#)

⁵ <https://canadianmidwives.org/vaccines/>, <https://elearning.ubccpd.ca/enrol/index.php?id=394>