

Information for Employers

Overview of a Vaccinating Health Worker (VHW) and employer considerations

We're expanding the vaccinating workforce in Aotearoa by building the skills of people already working in the health sector.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we developed the COVID-19 Vaccinator Working Under Supervision (CVWUS) role. This role is short term and finishes 1 June 2023. We're building on the success of this initiative to enable healthcare workers to administer a broader range of vaccines.

As well as helping us build our vaccinating workforce, the Vaccinating Health Worker (VHW) role will help diversify the workforce by training more Māori and Pacific people to vaccinate. This helps us have the right people in the right places at the right time to vaccinate our most vulnerable, and to help protect our tamariki, rangatahi, whānau/families and at-risk population groups.

About the VHW role

The VHW role prepares health care workers and kaiāwhina to prepare and/or administer a range of vaccines after a period of training and authorisation.

There are two stages to the VHW role:

- Stage 1: VHWs will be able to administer COVID-19 (Pfizer) and the influenza vaccines for 12 years+ and vaccines for Human Papillomavirus (HPV9) and Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (whooping cough) (Tdap) for 11 years+.
- Stage 2: VHWs will be able to prepare and administer all vaccines outlined in Stage 1, including administering COVID-19 (Pfizer) and influenza to 5 years+, and also MMR for 5 years+.

VHWs need to be authorised by Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand and have gained experience as a Stage 1 VHW before being nominated by their employer to apply for 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 practitioner.

As an employer, your role is to nominate and support the training of your staff to become a VHW or VHW Clinical Supervisor, and to ensure the proper procedures are followed.

Details on how to nominate your staff are available on the [IMAC website](#). Alternatively, you can reach out to your local IMAC Advisor and Education Facilitators for guidance.

Why do you need a VHW Clinical Supervisor?

The VHW doesn'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 to the VHW.

As a VHW Clinical Supervisor, they will need to:

- be a New Zealand registered healthcare professional
- be a fully authorised vaccinator or provisional 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 to administer vaccines. There is a 1:4 ratio VHW Clinical Supervisor to VHW to prepare vaccines (this is only relevant for authorised VHW Stage 2).

Note: The VHW Clinical Supervisor is different to the Clinical Assessor. The Clinical Assessor must be an authorised vaccinator with a minimum of two years vaccinating experience.

Who can become a Vaccinating Health Worker?

A VHW applicant might already be working in the health sector - for example, as a pharmacy technician or kaiāwhina - or have been trained as a health professional in New Zealand or overseas, but is not currently holding a NZ practising certificate.

There are two ways to become a VHW:

- If they are already an authorised CVWUS, they can transition to become a VHW by undertaking further training.
- If they are not already a CVWUS, they can enter the learning pathway to become a VHW.

What do employers need to do?

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

This includes:

- either delivering the core learning for training VHWs or enabling access to courses
- ensuring VHW clinical supervisors have appropriate knowledge and training on the scope of the VHW
- ensuring that the VHWs role attend and complete any required upskilling education and training
- retaining up to date training records for VHWs, including authorisation and CPR, to ensure these are valid at all times of practice
- ensuring appropriately trained and certified staff work under clinical supervision by a registered health professional.

Employers must ensure the daily staff profile - including 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.

What training is required for the VHW role?

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: <https://covid.immune.org.nz/about/meet-team>
- Face-to-face practical training sessions 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:

- Working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Working with people with disabilities
- Communicating and interpersonal relationships
- Health and safety, personal protection equipment (PPE), and infection prevention and control (IPC)
- Ethics, privacy, and mental health
- 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.

As an employer you will also ensure your employee(s) complete CPR and COVID-19 Immunisation Register (CIR) training.

The vaccine specific training material has been developed by IMAC. Access to this training occurs once you have sent through a nomination to IMAC. IMAC will then send out unique package codes to access each course to the staff member undertaking the training.

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](#).