

COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates

Consultation on the use on COVID-19 Vaccine Certificates in domestic settings

OCTOBER 2021

NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY - For consultation

Background

- COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates (CVCs) can be used as tool to provide evidence that someone has been vaccinated for COVID-19.
- We are exploring how a CVC could be used in Aotearoa New Zealand, to help continue our strong public health response by protecting communities from potential outbreaks of COVID-19.
- They could be used, alongside other COVID-19 public health measures, to support large events going ahead, providing security for both attendees and organisers over the summer. CVCs could also enable businesses to continue to operate when gathering limits are in place.
- We are looking for your views on:
 - Where CVCs could be mandated, optional, and prohibited
 - Exemptions from CVCs
 - Operational concerns
 - Considerations on whether workers at high-risk events and venues would be required to present CVCs.

Potential settings for introduction of CVCs

Mandatory (at large high-risk events at all alert levels - 500+ ticketed/controlled entry events which meet at least one of the public health criteria)	Medium-risk events and settings (optional but could be mandatory for escalated alert levels, regardless of capacity limits)	Guidelines provided (organisers can choose to adopt for certainty in escalated Alert Levels to continue without capacity limits)	Prohibited (human-needs providers and key community spaces)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• music festivals• large scale spectator sporting events (e.g. All Blacks game)• exhibitions and conventions (e.g. Beervana, Home Shows)• conferences• awards dinners• A&P shows	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• museums• art galleries• aquariums• graduations and school concerts• commercial domestic inter-regional travel• hospitality venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• community festivals• street festivals• free outdoor events• parades/protests• Faith based services• Marae• private gatherings, including weddings and funerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• supermarkets• dairies• pharmacies and health providers• schools (classroom settings)• libraries• public services

Exemptions framework

Exemption	Negative test	Evidence to present for entry	Rationale
Children under the age of 12	Not required	Not required	<p>Children under the age of 12 are not eligible for vaccination in New Zealand. We have proposed an exemption for those aged under 12 that does not require the use of a COVID-19 negative test.</p> <p>No evidence would be required from children under 12, as they largely do not have identification documents aside from passports. Passports are inconsistently available, so this would operate on a high-trust based model.</p>
Those who are not able to be vaccinated for medical reasons	Not required in low COVID-19 transmission settings, could be required in outbreak settings	Via the COVID Immunisation Register, issue proof of an exemption (either digitally or via post)	<p>Unable to be vaccinated</p> <p>Evidence could be checked at points of entry, similarly to CVCs, and the process could rely on existing documentation (such as through the COVID Immunisation Register) to be incorporated into a digital format or via post</p> <p>We consider this to be consistent with worker vaccination exemptions on health grounds, so would have a consistent approach to workers/attendees</p>

Operationalising CVCs and Legal Mechanisms

- The Ministry of Health is working on a two-stage delivery of a potential domestic vaccine certificate
- Stage one will provide a paper-based certificate that can also be stored on mobile phones. Stage two would follow and include a digital verification system.
- Work is still underway on how the enforcement of CVCs can be operationalised – including QR scanning and verification
- We are keen to hear from stakeholders on implementation and operationalisation of domestic CVCs
- *Legal mechanisms*
- The government, private sector and non-government organisations could, with relevant considerations of public health and human rights, introduce vaccination status as an entry requirement for their premises.
- This would also involve an exemptions framework to protect individuals who cannot be vaccinated against discrimination, so long as this does not undermine the public health reason for the restriction.

Key Questions

1. What are your views on the potential use of vaccination status requirements for entry to high-risk events? How would requiring CVCs for entry impact your sector's ability to operate?
2. Do you have any suggestions of events/venues captured within the proposed categories?
3. What are your views on the exemption framework?
4. What would you need to see in government requirements and guidance to make using CVCs an efficient process?

Next steps

- We welcome feedback to these questions and on other issues raised by **midday Thursday 7th October**
- We will use this feedback to inform our report back on stakeholder consultation (in week of 11th October) to the Minister for COVID-19 Response

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- They could be used, alongside other COVID-19 public health measures, to support large events going ahead, providing security for both attendees and organisers over the summer. CVCs could also enable community events and festivals to continue to operate when gathering limits are in place.
- We are looking for your views on:
 - Where CVCs could be mandated, optional, and prohibited and the impacts on social cohesion and equity
 - Exemptions from CVCs
 - Operational concerns

Potential settings for introduction of CVCs

Mandatory (at large high-risk events at all alert levels - 500+ ticketed/controlled entry events which meet at least one of the public health criteria)	Medium-risk events and settings (optional but could be mandatory for escalated alert levels, regardless of capacity limits)	Guidelines provided (organisers can choose to adopt for certainty in escalated Alert Levels to continue without capacity limits)	Prohibited (human-needs providers and key community spaces)
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Equity and social licence impacts

- There are equity considerations for any introduction of CVCs, including the impact on social licence for vaccination and on people's day-to-day lives. This is due to the varied vaccine uptake across population groups, including being disproportionately low for Māori and Pacific.
- As well as impacting people who cannot be vaccinated for health/medical reasons, the introduction of CVCs may impact people who are legally exercising their right to not be vaccinated.
- Work is underway to develop an exemption framework and to prohibit the use of CVCs in certain settings, to ensure access to life-preserving services (e.g. health care and supermarkets).

Operationalising CVCs and Legal Mechanisms

- The Ministry of Health is working on a two-stage delivery of a potential domestic vaccine certificate
- Stage one will provide a paper-based certificate that can also be stored on mobile phones. Stage two would follow and include a digital verification system.
- Work is still underway on how the enforcement of CVCs can be operationalised – including QR scanning and verification. At this stage it is envisaged that an app is developed for businesses to use that can scan customers' CVCs.
- We are keen to hear from stakeholders on implementation and operationalisation of domestic CVCs

Legal mechanisms

- The government, private sector and non-government organisations is able to, with relevant considerations of public health and human rights, introduce vaccination status as an entry requirement for their premises.
- This would also involve an exemption framework to protect individuals who cannot be vaccinated against discrimination, so long as this does not undermine the public health reason for the restriction.

Key Questions

1. What are your views on the potential use of vaccination status requirements for entry to high-risk events? How would requiring CVCs for entry benefit and impact your community?
2. Where venues and event organisers could choose to use CVCs to operate in escalated Alert Levels, what would you need to see in government guidance to support the use of CVCs?
3. Do you have suggestions of additional faith-based and community events/venues to capture within the proposed categories?
4. What are your views on the exemption framework?
5. What would you need to see in government requirements and guidance to make the use of CVCs an equitable tool that is successfully adopted?

Next steps

- Further advice is being developed on prohibiting CVCs in certain settings to ensure that unvaccinated people are not prevented from accessing life-preserving services.
- We welcome feedback to these questions and on other issues raised by **midday Thursday 7th October**
- We will use this feedback to inform our report back on stakeholder consultation (in week of 11th October) to the Minister for COVID-19 Response