

CMOH Order 44-2021, PSI Exemption FAQs

Current COVID-19 Restrictions – Questions and Answers

September 27, 2021

The following are common questions stemming from [CMOH Order 45 - 2021](#) and the associated CMOH Order 44-2021 exemption for the post-secondary sector.

- Institutions covered in the post-secondary sector include: publicly funded post-secondary institutions identified in the PSLA, First Nations College entities, private career colleges, private faith based institutions, and other adult learning providers (See Appendix A in exemption for a full list).
- For the purposes of this document, all of the above will be referred to as Post-Secondary Institutions (PSIs).

Restriction Exemption Program VS Proof of Vaccine Policy

- The Restriction Exemption Program is not applicable to PSIs.
- Instead, PSIs are eligible for a sector exemption if they establish and implement their own proof of vaccine policy.
 - Once the policy is implemented,
 - PSI students do not need to maintain physical distancing in learning environments, and
 - cafeterias are able to be open for indoor dining for students and staff, and are permitted to allow diners to sit with more than 6 individuals, with individuals who are not their household/close contact, or maintain physical distancing in the cafeteria.
 - Physical distancing must be maintained in common areas.
 - Masking is required in all public indoor spaces.
- To be eligible for the sector exemption, PSI proof of Vaccine policies must ensure:
 - All students have been vaccinated with at least a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the World Health Organization (WHO) no later than September 20, 2021, and
 - be fully immunized with a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the WHO no later than November 1, 2021
 - full immunization occurs 14 days after the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, which means all students need to receive their second dose no later than October 18, 2021.
 - Options:
 - In place of full immunization, PSIs are able to accept the following:
 - proof of a medical exemption; or
 - regular COVID-19 testing through privately paid testing or testing provided by the PSI.
 - Regular testing is considered to be at least twice per week.

- If a PSI implemented a proof of vaccine policy prior to the Sept 16th, they are permitted to accept the vaccine declarations accepted under said policy as a transitional solution until October 4, 2021
 - After October 4th, the PSI must ensure the individuals who have declared their vaccination are compliant with the vaccination conditions of this exemption.
- The PSI must develop and implement a compliance policy outlining how it will monitor and ensure compliance and enforcement of its proof of vaccine policy.
- It is up to the PSI to implement, monitor the effectiveness, and enforce their own proof of vaccine policy.
 - There is some flexibility in the processes and procedures, as long as the policy, at minimum, meets the above required elements.
 - PSIs can have earlier deadlines for proof of vaccination (but not later) or enhanced testing requirements.

Rapid testing

- If this option is chosen, the following information applies:
 - The PSI can determine if they will provide testing to students or have students pay for their own.
 - PSIs may participate in the GOA rapid testing program by submitting an application. Details are available at alberta.ca/rapid-testing-program.aspx.
 - PSIs must have a process for verifying vaccination or testing status and can develop their own compliance and enforcement procedures.

Required Measures

- Masking requirements remain in effect in all indoor public places even with programs in place.
- Individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms must isolate in accordance with CMOH Order 39-2021, and should seek testing.

Staff and Faculty

- The PSI exemption is not related to vaccination status of staff or faculty.
- It is up to the discretion of a PSI to implement a vaccine policy for staff, faculty and contractors, but seeking legal advice on an employee program is advised.

Restrictions if no proof of vaccine policy is in place

- If PSIs choose not to implement a proof of vaccine policy, they are not eligible for the exemption
- They must continue physical distancing in all indoor public spaces, including learning environments.
- Cafeterias would remain closed for indoor dining.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does the PSI's proof of vaccination policy need to apply to all programs at the PSI? Is it possible for some programs (e.g. shorter term training programs) to not participate in a proof of vaccination policy, while others at the PSI are participating?

- The PSI must implement the policy for all students.

Will existing attestation/testing regimes already established at post-secondary institutions suffice allowing a gradual transition to a full proof of vaccination policy over the period of a few weeks?

- Where an institution has put in place a proof of vaccine policy prior to the granting of this exemption, any vaccine declarations accepted under that policy are considered a sufficient transitional solution until October 4, 2021 after which the institution must ensure the compliance of those persons the requirements for proof of vaccine, medical exemption, or rapid testing as outlined in the exemption.

Some providers already have their own processes and earlier deadlines for vaccinations. Can they utilize their own approaches or must they align elements of the proof of vaccination policy?

- To be exempt from the physical distancing requirements and dining requirements, the PSI must meet the base conditions outlined in the exemptions related to the post-secondary sector. Entities are free to impose a higher standard of restrictions.

Can PSIs apply for rapid testing kits and where is the source of information on accessing rapid tests?

- PSIs can participate in the GOA rapid testing program by submitting an application. Details are available at alberta.ca/rapid-testing-program.aspx.
- PSIs should otherwise source kits from private providers. The most common rapid test is Abbott Panbio and PSIs may be able to source directly from the distributor.
- If students are required to pay for their own tests, PCR tests and rapid tests can be completed at most pharmacies.
- There may be other labs offering this same service.
- There is no requirement for the PSI to provide the tests. Students can be asked to acquire their own tests in order to participate in the proof of vaccination policy at their institution.
- PSIs must implement processes and procedures for validating and ensuring quality and safety of a program is sufficient to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools.

Do providers need to offer the option of a negative test or rapid testing as per the third requirement of the proof of vaccination policy?

- No. Proof of either vaccination or recent negative test is considered the minimum acceptable standard; it needn't be both.
- Medical exemptions for vaccinations may be accepted. These are issued by a physician or nurse practitioner, as determined by guidance provided by the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College and Association of Registered Nurses
- A PSI may choose to accept only one or the other.

What form(s) of vaccination proof will be acceptable for an initial request for people to upload proof?

- Acceptable forms of proof include:
 - Provincial proof of vaccination card.
 - Document provided by the pharmacy or vaccination site at the point where second vaccination occurred, showing that it was the second vaccination.
 - Screenshot or PDF of vaccination record currently available on MyHealth Alberta site, showing evidence of two doses.
 - QR code.
- The proof of vaccination must include the name, type of vaccine and date of administration.

Do we accept proof of vaccination from other countries?

- Proof of vaccination from a vaccine authorized for use by the World Health Organization (WHO) would be accepted from the country where that person was vaccinated.

When will the QR code become available?

- QR code is scheduled to be available as of October 1st.

How should PSIs be handling personal and medical information they are collecting?

- PSIs should obtain legal advice to inform their program if collecting and maintaining a list of individuals that can enter and re-enter a facility (e.g., so that repeat clients do not need to show proof of vaccination each time).
- Personal health information should not be stored onsite.

How soon after a student receives their first dose would they be able to enter a classroom at a PSI with a proof of vaccination policy?

- This is not a requirement of the exemption.
- As long as students are fully immunized by November 1, 2021, or regular testing is occurring, or they have a medical exemption, the condition of the exemption is met

Will students who are only partially vaccinated (one dose) need negative covid tests until they are 14 days past their second dose?

- This is not a requirement of the exemption.

Are individuals required to have two doses by November 1st, or two doses with full effectiveness by November 1st, meaning that the second shot was received October 18th?

- Two doses with full effectiveness by November 1: students would be required to have received their second vaccination on October 18th or sooner.

Will there be a standard accommodation/exemption for health and religious reasons? What kind of proof can be legally asked for?

- Alberta does not offer a vaccine exemption for religious reasons.
- Exemptions may be granted for those persons unable to vaccinate for medical reasons. These are issued by a physician or nurse practitioner.

How often does rapid testing need to occur?

- It is recommended that rapid COVID-19 testing happens twice per week.

What requirements are there for post-secondary providers to accommodate students who choose not to get vaccinated and withdraw from their studies?

- There are no requirements outlined for PSIs, and decisions on accommodating student withdrawals would be at the provider's discretion.
- We have seen that many providers have extended their withdrawal deadlines in order to provide students with additional time.

What are requirements for cafeterias/food courts located on post-secondary campuses?

- PSIs who are under the exemption are able to open cafeterias for in-person dining, and does not require individuals to sit 6 to a table and/or with their close contacts/household.
 - Liquor service restrictions still apply.
- Restaurants/pubs/bars/food courts/etc are not in scope of the PSI exemption.

Can you provide clarification on spacing requirements for indoor events on campus (including convocation)?

- Indoor events are out of scope of the exemption.
- Under CMOH Order 44-2021, no indoor gatherings are permitted.
- Convocation would be restricted to 1/3 capacity, physical distancing, and masking requirements.

Does the proof of vaccine policy apply to all other aspects of post-secondary business – sports, recreation facilities, residences, libraries, campus common areas, hallways, etc.?

- The scope of the exemption is the learning environments and cafeterias and does not cover areas where individuals not included in the proof of exemption program may have access.
- Access must be limited to only those who have demonstrated proof of vaccine or they may not be included as an in-scope location. This may include libraries provided access is restricted at all times.
- Common areas where the public may access (even if not normally present) such as hallways and common areas are not in-scope of the program.

What is the guidance for sports and performance activities on campus?

- Unless part of curriculum, these activities are outside the scope of the exemption.
- If these activities are not part of curriculum, they must follow public health measures outlined in CMOH Order 44-2021:
 - no indoor, group adult physical activity
 - solo and 1:1 physical activity permitted, with 3m physical distance between all participants

Can PSIs develop a cohort system as a part of their policies?

- Cohort systems are out of scope of the exemption.
- PSIs can have additional measures if they choose.

Can PSIs extend their proof of vaccination policy to staff, faculty and/or contractors?

- PSIs can make decisions related to vaccine policies for staff, faculties and/or contractors. It is recommended they seek legal advice for these policies.
- This is not part of this exemption.

Is there additional clarification on the definition of the “mandatory work from home” requirement?

- Mandatory work-from-home measures are in place unless the employer has determined an in-person presence is required for operational effectiveness.
- This is up to the discretion of the PSI, however a proof of vaccine program cannot be used to substitute the mandatory work from home restriction

Programs that cannot physically distance (eg. Flight school) be exempt from social distancing as long as they wear masks in the event that a student is not vaccinated?

- If program is offered through an eligible PSI who has met the conditions of the exemption, physical distancing is not required.
- If the PSI chooses to accept negative COVID-19 tests as part of their vaccine policy, then students do not need to be vaccinated.

Can post-secondary providers proceed with in-person class delivery?

- Yes.

Can PSIs offer online courses to those who are not vaccinated?

- It is up to the PSI to determine how and if they will accommodate unvaccinated students.
- Any alternate delivery option (e.g., online) would be up to the institution.

Does the provincial mask mandate still supersede proof of vaccination policy? Do students have to still wear masks and social distance in the classroom if they are vaccinated?

- Mandatory masking is required in all cases, even in classrooms at PSIs with a proof of vaccination policy in place. Students would be required to mask.

Are former COVID patients exempt from vaccinations / restrictions?

- No. Having recovered from COVID does not exempt anyone from the current health restrictions and is not eligible for a vaccination exemption.

There are institutions that provide hands on experience in the personal and wellness sectors. Public clients will be onsite accessing services provided by supervised students. Which order supersedes the other with regards to out of scope businesses? Can an institution apply their own policies that will apply to clients of those services?

- Physical distancing would not be required between the student and client while the service is being provided, consistent with the exemption to physical distancing in Order 44-2021 (section 4.4)
- The students must also comply with the PSI's vaccine policy, should a policy have been implemented by the PSI.

Can adult learning programs that run out of community libraries or other buildings/organizations that are out of scope to participate in REP still operate without restrictions if they implement their own proof of vaccine policy?

- Yes, the students must follow the conditions of entry to the facility (either public health measures or REP), and then the conditions of the PSI's vaccine policy to remove the condition of physical distancing in the learning space.
- Masking is required in all indoor public facilities.

What are the restrictions for post-secondary institutions who teach personal and wellness services?

- Students must follow the conditions of the PSI's proof of vaccine policy.
- If the PSI does not implement the proof of vaccine policy to be eligible for the exemption, the student can only come within 2 metres of their client while the service is being provided.