

## WORKFORCE IMMUNISATION/SCREENING

### This document applies to:

All Austin Health staff including, bank, agency, students, contractors VMO and volunteers

### State any related Austin Health policies, procedures or guidelines:

[Workforce Health Safety & Wellness Policy](#)

[Infection Control Policy](#)

[Infection Control Standard and Transmission based Precautions](#)

Workforce Immunisations Guidelines

### Purpose:

To ensure the safety and protection of patients, staff and visitors from infection by exposure to Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs).

To provide guidelines to Austin Health employees/health care workers (HCWs) regarding vaccination requirements.

### Policy:

Austin Health is committed to providing a safe environment for all staff, patients and visitors.

It is the responsibility of all health care workers (HCW) to participate in the Workforce Immunisation Program.

Immunisations will be offered to all Austin Health HCWs, dependent upon the risk category of their work activity, not job description.

Informed consent before vaccination is required. Signed documentation of refusal is required for those HCWs who refuse vaccination.

Vaccination must only be undertaken by a medical doctor, an accredited nurse immuniser or a Division 1 registered nurse or medication endorsed enrolled nurse, who has verbal or written authorization from a medical practitioner to access and administer the vaccine for each patient.

Details of staff VPD history, vaccination and Immunisation status are to be maintained in a secure and confidential database.

### Definitions:

Health Care Workers will be categorised into 2 groups according to their likelihood of exposure to potentially infectious agents. Austin Health groups are based on the NHMRC guidelines as follows:

**Category 1: Direct and indirect contact with blood or body substances (high risk). This category includes:**

- All persons who have direct physical contact with, or potential exposure to blood or body substances. Examples include medical and paramedical personnel, nurses, laboratory staff, allied health practitioners, residential mental health workers, health care students, biomedical and engineering staff, mortuary technicians, central sterile supply staff, and staff responsible for cleaning, decontamination and disposal of contaminated materials.

- Workers in patient areas who rarely have direct contact with blood or body substances. These employees may be exposed to infections spread by droplets, such as measles and rubella, but are unlikely to be at risk from blood borne diseases. Examples include catering staff and ward clerks, volunteers.

**Category 2: Minimal patient/client contact (low risk). This category includes:**

- All persons with no patient/client contact and have no greater exposure to infectious diseases than the general public. Examples include medical records and gardening staff, clerical/admin staff.

**Evidence of Immunisation/Serology:**

Anecdotal evidence is not adequate to establish immune status. Employee immunisation status is established through one of two means; the employee providing documented evidence of:

- History of disease
- Vaccine(s)
- Serology (ie vaccination records, pathology results) or
- Serology testing and/or immunisation provided by Austin Health

**Health Care Worker:** Refers to doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, students on clinical placements, laboratory staff, mortuary attendants, clerical staff, volunteers, support staff such as cleaners, orderlies, ward clerk, food services who may have contact with patients or with a patients blood or body substance as a result of their workplace activity.

**VPD:** Vaccine Preventable Diseases

## ***Roles & Responsibilities;***

**Health Care Workers** are responsible for:

- Undertaking pre employment screening and immunisation when engaged in high risk activities(Category 1)
- Reporting any infectious status if it places co-workers and/or patients at risk, to their manager
- Reporting any known potential exposures to blood and blood stained body substances via the Blood and Body Fluid Exposure (BBFE) protocol and in Riskman
- Seeking appropriate medical care when required to manage any infections
- Maintaining a record of the immunisations received should HCW be immunised outside the Austin Health program and providing evidence to Austin Health for recording in a confidential database.
- Complying with all Austin Health Infection Control and Immunisation policies and procedures.

**Department and Laboratory Heads** are responsible for:

- Ensuring high risk staff (Category 1) are offered the appropriate routine immunisations and following an exposure to a vaccine preventable disease, as per relevant hospital policy.
- Ensuring immunisation requirements and Austin Health Immunisation Policy is clearly stated when recruiting, in the job advertisement, in position description and made clear at interview and prior to offer of employment.
- When a Category 1 HCW is transferring work areas, ensuring HR is advised of the need for immunisation status check, by ticking the box provided for this purpose, when issuing the online e-requisition authorising the transfer.

**HR Solutions** are responsible for:

- Providing the immunisation pre-employment questionnaire in new entrant paperwork, and reminding new entrants of their need to comply with this prior to attending a sign-on appointment
- Ensuring that the immunisation pre-employment questionnaire is complete and signed by a new entrant and that they have attached either copies of their own records of serology test results and immunisation records, or a stamped pathology slip as evidence that they have attended Austin Health's Pathology Department for Serology Testing.
- If the new entrant objects to providing their immunisation status or to being vaccinated, HR Solutions are to obtain this in writing and then trigger the review process with the Immunisation Review Panel, and communicate to the new entrant that they cannot start until their objection has been reviewed, and a decision made.

**Accredited Immunisation Nurse** is responsible for:

- Management of the Immunisation Clinic with oncall support from the Microbiology Registrar, as required
- Reviewing returned pre-employment questionnaires and results and ensuring data is entered into the Immunisation database(s).
- Maintaining the Immunisation database of Health Care Workers' immunisation history, serology and results as per Department of Human Services (DHS) guidelines and ensure appropriate filing is completed.
- Making recommendations for additional vaccinations or serology to ensure compliance with DHS Immunisation Guidelines.
- Facilitating and ensuring HCWs have been identified as requiring vaccination attend the immunisation clinic and there is appropriate follow-up.
- Triggering the review process if vaccination is refused, or if a HCW has not complied with the vaccination requirements within 2 months of their start date with Austin Health
- Providing information about the relevant VPD's via a web page and education sessions
- Reporting all abnormal pathology results and adverse immunisation events that occur to the attention of the Hospital on call ID physician. Referring any employees to ID clinics as required.
- Liaising with Infection Control on a regular basis
- Providing report(s) annually of employee vaccination status

**Immunisation Review Panel** is responsible for:

- Reviewing refusal (of a new entrants) to participate in serology testing and/or necessary vaccinations against the risk profile of the role, and making a recommendation about proceeding with employment, for sign-off by the Chief Medical Officer and Executive Director Human Resources.

**Workforce Health, Safety & Wellness** is responsible for:

- Developing, guiding and monitoring a workforce immunisation program that complies with the current national guidelines, including the processes for handling non compliance.
- Developing and reviewing policies and procedures for the workforce immunisation program
- Ensuring the workforce has access to appropriate information, testing, training, counselling and appropriate vaccination programs.
- Managing the Workforce Immunisation program and Immunisation clinic(s).

## **Requirements:**

Austin Health employment guidelines require that all HCW provide evidence of either immunisation status, immunisation or pathology results for certain VPDs prior to commencing employment.

The pre-employment immunisation questionnaire is a mandatory requirement for completion by all Category 1 HCWs and is to be completed and returned to HR at sign-on for employment. (Appendix A)

Immunisation and/or pathology results may be obtained from the HCW Medical Practitioner of choice and/or the previous employer, and must be attached to the completed questionnaire. (Appendix A)

Should a final candidate be unable to provide any evidence of immunity or vaccination records they will be required, prior to 'sign on', to undergo routine pathology screening at Austin Healths Clinical Pathology to assess immune status. Sign on will be delayed/re-scheduled until pathology screening is completed.

Should a final candidate refuse to have the required vaccinations for their role, this will be put in writing and be reviewed. Depending on the level of risk to staff and patients, the employment offer may be withdrawn.

Existing HCWs who refuse to participate in the immunisation process and any recommended pathology screening, will need to state this in writing, and may be subject to employment review, imposed work restrictions, and/or may be redeployed from high-risk areas.

Where there is a risk of a HCW transmitting infection to a patient or co worker, e.g. if the HCW is infected with an acute or other transmissible infection, carries a blood borne virus or has a predisposing skin condition, the HCW must advise their manager and enter counselling regarding work options, and either be rostered appropriately, or be provided with equipment (PPE), information and facilities to enable them to perform their duties without placing others at risk.

### **Informed Consent and Decline:**

Informed written consent will be obtained before vaccination. If recommended vaccinations are refused, signed documentation of refusal will be obtained if possible, together with the reason for refusal. (Appendix B)

Refusal will be documented in the confidential immunisation database and employment may be reviewed, along with imposed work restrictions, and/or re-deployment from high-risk areas.

### **Record Keeping/Database:**

All vaccination records will be stored in a confidential data base which will be accessible by the Workforce Immunisation Nurse and Infection Control. The database will contain details of staff VPD history, antibody and test results, records of vaccinations consented/refused, brand name and batch number of vaccines administered.

Vaccine records will be generated on request. The immunisation history (administered vaccinations and serology results) will be made available to HCW's as they occur.

Individuals who provide their own records of immunisation are required to maintain their own records. Copies will be taken by Austin Health for the purpose of entering immunisation status in the confidential immunisation database only.

### **Students on Clinical Placement:**

It is expected that the respective teaching institutions whose students attend Austin Health for clinical placement, will have policies and procedures in place to ensure that their students are appropriately immunised prior to placement.

Austin Health is not responsible for routine immunisation of students attending Austin Health for clinical placement.

### **Annual Influenza Vaccination:**

Austin Health provides for an annual Influenza Vaccination program. All HCWs are strongly encouraged to take the opportunity to have the seasonal influenza vaccine as there is a risk they may be exposed to and transmit the disease to co workers, high risk patient populations and family members.

Maintaining a level of immunity in the HCW population helps ensure the risk of transmission is minimised. Flu vaccine is especially recommended for pregnant HCWs as the illness may be more severe in pregnancy.

The Department of Health supply free seasonal influenza vaccine to public hospitals for all HCWs and has done so since 2001. The Austin Health annual influenza vaccination program aligns with the Victorian Immunisation Strategy 2012 and is available across all campuses from March/April onwards.

### **Author/Contributors:**

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Infection Control Department

Microbiology Department

HR Solutions

### **Legislation/References/Supporting Documents:**

Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004

Department of Human Services Victoria. *Health Care Workers (HCW) Immunisation Policy in Victorian Hospitals*. March 2000

NHMRC (2010). *Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare*. Commonwealth of Australia

National Health and Medical Research Council. *The Australian Immunisation Handbook* 9<sup>th</sup> Edition  
Department of Health. *Immunisation Guidelines for Health Care Workers*. Sixth Edition.

AS/NZS2243.3:2002 *Safety in Laboratories – Microbiological aspects and containment facilities*.

### **Authorised/Endorsed by:**

Executive Director Human Resources,

Austin Health Executive

### **Primary Person/Department Responsible for Document:**

Elizabeth Wotherspoon, Director Workforce Health, Safety & Wellness

## Appendix A: Workforce Pre-employment Immunisation Questionnaire

### Workforce Pre-employment Immunisation Questionnaire

Austin Health employment guidelines require all Category 1 Health Care Workers to **provide evidence** of either pathology and/or immunisation results for certain diseases prior to commencing employment. Immunisation/pathology results should be obtained from your GP and/or your previous employer. If you are unable to provide evidence of immunity or a vaccination record, you will be required, prior to sign on, to undergo routine pathology screening to assess your immunity to certain vaccine preventable diseases, as listed below. A copy of Austin Health's workforce immunisation policy is available on the Austin Health Career Website (*See the back of this form for risk category 1 Health Care Worker required vaccinations*)

**Please completed and return this mandatory form with your pathology/immunisation results to HR Solutions at sign on. Failure to complete this form will prevent you from signing on and commencing employment at Austin Health.**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Employee No:</b>
<b>D.O.B:</b>	<b>UR No (Consent provided):</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Mobile No:</b>

I have attached copies of all required immunisation & pathology vaccination results.

OR

I will attend routine immunisation screening at Austin Health pathology.

<b>1. PATHOLOGY RESULTS required as evidence indicating immunity to the following vaccine preventable diseases:</b>		
<b>Hepatitis B</b>	<b>Pathology results provided</b> ( <i>please circle the relevant responses</i> )	<b>YES/NO/Attached</b>
<b>Chickenpox</b>	<b>Pathology results provided</b>	<b>YES /NO/Attached</b>
<b>Measles</b>	<b>Pathology results provided</b>	<b>YES /NO/Attached</b>
<b>Mumps</b>	<b>Pathology results provided</b>	<b>YES /NO/Attached</b>
<b>Rubella</b>	<b>Pathology results provided</b>	<b>YES /NO/Attached</b>
<b>2. IMMUNISATION RESULTS/RECORD required as evidence of immunity to the following vaccine preventable diseases:</b>		
<b><u>Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis:</u></b> ( <i>please circle the relevant responses</i> )		
Have you received a Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis containing vaccine (dTpa) as an adult?		<b>YES/NO/Attached</b>
If yes, is evidence of immunisation provided?		<b>YES/NO/Attached</b>
<b><u>Tuberculosis:</u></b> ( <i>please circle the relevant responses</i> )		
Have you had a Quantiferon Gold blood test?		<b>YES/ NO/ RESULTS PROVIDED</b>
Have you had a BCG vaccine?		<b>YES /NO / RECORD PROVIDED</b>
Have you had a Mantoux test?		<b>YES/ NO/ RESULTS PROVIDED</b>
<b><u>Laboratory staff only:</u></b> ( <i>please circle the relevant responses</i> )		
Have you received a Meningococcal C vaccine?		<b>YES/NO/RECORD PROVIDED</b>
<b>EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:</b> _____	<b>DATE:</b> _____	
<b>PATHOLOGY SIGNATURE:</b> _____	<b>DATE:</b> _____	
<i>Office Use Only: Scanned to Profile Date:</i>		<i>Name:</i>

The Austin Health workforce immunisation program has been developed to ensure the safety and protection of both patients and healthcare workers.

The potential for health care workers to be exposed to and transmit vaccine preventable diseases such as hepatitis B, influenza, measles, rubella, and pertussis if not immune is high. Maintaining immunity in the healthcare worker population helps to prevent transmission of vaccine preventable diseases to and from health care workers and patients, and is thus a key health and safety prevention initiative to transmission of infection and disease at Austin Health.

### ***Risk Categorization:***

*Health Care workers may be categorised into groups according to the likelihood of their exposure to potentially infectious agents as follows:*

#### **Category 1: *Direct contact with blood or body substances (Requires Vaccination in Boxes 1-2)***

This includes all persons who have direct physical contact with, (or potential exposure to) blood or body substances. Examples include medical practitioners, nurses, allied health practitioners, health care students, laboratory staff, mortuary technicians, biomedical and engineering staff, mortuary technicians, central sterile supply staff, and staff responsible for cleaning, decontamination and disposal of contaminated materials.

#### ***Indirect contact with blood and body substances (Requires Vaccination in Boxes 1-2)***

This category also includes workers in patient areas who rarely have direct contact with blood or body substances. These employees may be exposed to infections spread by droplets, such as measles and rubella, but are unlikely to be at risk from blood borne diseases. Examples include catering staff and ward clerks, volunteers.

#### **Category 2: *Minimal patient contact (No requirement for vaccination)***

This category includes staff groups with no patient/client contact and therefore have and/or pose no greater exposure to infectious diseases than the general public. Examples include medical records, gardening staff, administration staff.

### **Confidentiality of records:**

Please note confidentiality and privacy of records is ensured. You will be provided with your individual Immunisation Record Card and it is recommended that you keep this in a secure place for future reference if required. A copy of your medical screening record may also be provided upon written request.

Further information may be obtained from the Austin Health Workforce Immunisation/Screening Policy available on the HUB or Careers website.

## Appendix B: Declination of Austin Health Immunisation Program

I understand the conditions of Austin Health's immunisation policy and program and **decline to participate in the following recommended immunisations** listed below ( for immunisations declined):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hepatitis B              | <input type="checkbox"/> Varicella (Chickenpox)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hepatitis A              | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult diphtheria/tetanus   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Measles                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pertussis (whooping cough) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mumps                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Polio                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rubella (German measles) |   |

**Reason for declining:** \_\_\_\_\_

I am aware of the potential risks my decline of immunisation for vaccine preventable diseases may pose and that this may require Austin Health to impose work restrictions, may require me to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) or be redeployed from high-risk areas. The consequences of my refusing to be vaccinated for vaccine preventable diseases could endanger my health and the health of those with whom I have contact including; patients in this healthcare setting, my co-workers, my family and my community.

I am aware that I may commence the recommended immunisation schedule at any time should I wish to participate.

**Note: It is policy that if you decline immunisation screening before sign on or at the time of making a job application, your employment at Austin Health will need to be reconsidered.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Employee number:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Department/ward:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Office Use Only:*

*Scanned to profile date:*

*Name:*