

Position Statement

New Zealand registered optometrists in the optometrist scope of practice - with a current Annual Practising Certificate with no conditions APPROVED COVID-19 VACCINATOR

The Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (the Board) acknowledges we are in unprecedented times with a global pandemic at play and strongly believes registered health care professionals have an important role in protecting the public.

The Board has been asked by the Ministry of Health to consider enabling registered optometrists to contribute specifically to support New Zealand's largest immunisation programme.

The Board supports the Ministry of Health's national COVID-19 vaccination roll-out and is supportive of registered optometrists in the optometrist scope of practice who hold a current Annual Practising Certificate (APC) with no conditions to be trained to administer COVID-19 vaccines should they wish to do so. Please note that as well as the required pre-requisite training approved COVID-19 vaccinators must hold current certification to undertake cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

To support and enable these registered optometrists to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations, the Board has developed this position statement to provide guidance for optometrists, other health professionals and employers.

The optometrist scope of practice for optometrists registered in New Zealand indicates that clinical practice is defined as any work undertaken by an optometrist that relates to the care of an individual patient. This allows for workforce flexibility and responsiveness to allow optometrists to meet the growing healthcare demands for all New Zealanders.

Optometrists have extensive knowledge of human anatomy and the wider healthcare issues that are faced when disease affects a person. Whilst this is usually specific to their knowledge of the scientific evidence as it relates to eye care, the Board is acutely aware optometrists are a group of registered health professionals who can step into a shared space within the health sector to support the greater public good.

Approved COVID 19 vaccinator

Section 138(1)(f) of the HPCAA allows the Board to enter on the register "*any other matters ... the authority thinks appropriate.*" Therefore, the Board has agreed that registered optometrists in the

optometrist scope of practice who hold a current APC with no current conditions can, following appropriate training and attainment of authorisation as a COVID-19 vaccinator, become approved COVID-19 vaccinators. Please note that approved COVID-19 vaccinators must also hold current certification to undertake cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The vaccination training does not attract CPD points.

Practitioner responsibilities

Practitioners must advise the Board that they have completed the training and have become an **Approved COVID-19 vaccinator**. The practitioner will be required to provide the Board with evidence of their authorisation as a COVID-19 vaccinator issued by a Medical Officer of Health or the Director General of Health. This will be recorded on the register and will be available on request of the public, relevant District Health Board or other health agency.

Authorisation may be granted after successful completion of the relevant Ministry of Health approved COVID-19 vaccinator training, including demonstrating the competency requirements set out by [The Immunisation Advisory Centre](#). Please note this training does not attract CPD points.

Registered optometrists who become approved COVID-19 vaccinators will be subject to the requirements of the [Ministry of Health's Immunisation Handbook 2020](#) which sets standards for vaccinators.

Adherence to the Board's [Ethical Standards](#) is an obligation of every registered optometrist at all times. Optometrists are also expected to comply with the [Professional Standards and Competencies for Optometrists](#). These identify the standards against which the public can expect safe and competent practice.

It is the responsibility of the registered optometrist, and where relevant their employer, to ensure that they comply with any IMAC/Ministry of Health required Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities necessary to maintain their approved COVID-19 vaccinator status.

It is the registered optometrist's responsibility to:

1. ensure they are authorised by a Medical Officer of Health or the Director General of Health as a an approved COVID-19 vaccinator, and that they have undertaken the recognised education and training programme to administer a COVID-19 vaccine.
2. ensure that they have appropriate professional support and mentoring structures in place when acting as an approved COVID-19 vaccinator,
3. ensure that they maintain competence as an approved COVID-19 vaccinator by undertaking any IMAC/Ministry of Health required CPD, and
4. meet their professional and ethical obligations as a registered optometrist.

Registered optometrists whose authorisation as an approved COVID-19 vaccinator is revoked must immediately inform the Board of the change in status.

Insurance

Registered optometrists should give consideration to whether work as an approved COVID-19 vaccinator would be covered by public liability insurance or DHB insurance. The Board recommends that optometrists seek advice from their respective insurance companies or DHB-based legal representative, or from an independent legal representative.

How do I become a vaccinator?

For anyone interested in being a vaccinator, information can be found at [health.govt.nz](https://www.health.govt.nz) and FAQ's [HERE](#).

Please contact the Board:

1. When you have become and approved COVID-19 vaccinator so that this can be recorded on the register
2. If you need to change your practising status to become an approved COVID-19 vaccinator
3. If you need to return to the register to become an approved COVID-19 vaccinator

March 2021
Updated May 2021

The Board wishes to thank the Dietitians Board for the use of their position statement in developing this document.