

Immunization Competency Requirements for All Immunization Providers

Purpose: This policy provides guidelines on the immunization competencies required by immunizers who prepare and/or administer vaccines in New-Brunswick (NB). All immunizers preparing and administering vaccines must have the required education, training, and have the knowledge, skills, and judgment to administer vaccines safely.

In a pandemic, the training and education competencies will be set by the province determined by the specific pandemic context and needs.

Preamble: Immunization has become increasingly complex. Continual advancement of vaccine technology along with emerging/ re-emerging diseases, and multiple products available, immunizers require a specialized body of knowledge and technical skills. Healthcare professionals who are knowledgeable about evidence-based immunization strategies and best practices are critical to implementing a successful vaccination program. Competency in immunization administration leads to higher vaccine coverage rates which in turn will provide the highest possible level of community protection against vaccine preventable diseases.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) developed a manual called [Immunization Competencies for Health Professionals](#) to support the application of the National Guidelines for Immunization Practices, published in the [Canadian Immunization Guide](#). This reference manual is universal to a wide range of health care professionals with an adaptable framework to be used by stakeholders for immunization education programs or competency reviews.

Private Immunization services may be employed to provide immunization support to provincial Public Health Immunization Programs. These agencies will ensure that immunization services provided are in alignment with this policy and policies, standards, and guidelines of the New Brunswick Immunization Program Guide.

Policy: All immunizers administering vaccines in NB will have recognized training in immunization and maintain their competencies in all areas of practice to deliver safe vaccination programs.

Competency in immunization practice is the professional responsibility of both the individual and the employer. It is guided by professional practice standards, employer/organizational policies, and evidence-based research.

For the purposes of this policy, the term “health care professionals” and “immunizer” refers to:

Those employed by the Regional Health Authorities, by private immunization services or by private employers (e.g., community pharmacies, long term care facilities) who administer vaccines. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Public Health staff
- Acute and long-term care staff;
- Extra-mural, nursing home and adult residential facility staff;
- All health care professionals employed by Regional Health Authorities who administer vaccines as part of their practice (i.e., community health centers, in hospitals)
- Paramedics and pharmacy technicians,
- Community Health Nurses¹ and those employed by First Nation’s community health programs who administer vaccines under a directive provided by the Regional Medical Officer of Health (RMOH);
- All health care professionals employed by private immunization services;
- All health care professionals who are authorized prescribers² administering vaccines but do not require a directive.

¹ The term “community health nurses” refers to those nurses working in First Nations communities.

² In NB current authorized prescribers include physicians, nurse practitioners, optometrists, dentists, pharmacists, and midwives.

- All student health care professionals who are employed to administer vaccines (including in their clinical practicum) within the Regional Health Authorities or within private immunization services

Policy Standards:

1. **Immunization certification:** Employers will require each health care professional who will be immunizing in practice, to complete a knowledge and skills-based learning program prior to administering vaccines in NB. While it is recognized that many health care professionals have administered vaccine without completing formal competency education, ongoing competency must be re-assessed and maintained.
 - The following educational program related to immunization competency is recognized and approved for use by the Department of Health, Public Health New-Brunswick: [Education Program for Immunization Competencies](#) (EPIC) program.
 - Immunization learning programs independently developed by the employer/organizations must adhere to policies and standards of the [NBIPG](#) and will be based on PHAC's [Immunization Competencies for Health Professionals](#). Prior to their implementation, these learning programs **must also be approved by the Department of Health**.
 - Post-secondary institutions (universities, colleges, vocational schools, CEGEPs) have integrated immunization learning programs available and already accredited.
 - Certain organizations/employers recognize accredited immunization competency skills-based learning programs centered on the work environment and technical requirements (ex: pharmacy technicians).
 - Authorized prescribers² who administer vaccines will complete the accredited immunization competency learning program supported by their regulatory professional college or association.
2. **Designated person:** All employers of immunizers will assign a designated person who demonstrates the technical and behavioral competencies required to oversee and co-ordinate immunization activities, ensuring ongoing competency. The assigned individual will ensure the requirements in [Appendix A – Immunization Competency Requirements for all Immunizers Administering Vaccines in New-Brunswick](#) and the standards provided in NBIPG - [Directive for the Provision of all Immunization Services](#) are met.
 - Private immunization providers will assign a designated person who, in addition to the above, provides the contractor with the following information for each health care employee providing immunization services in New-Brunswick:
 - Immunizer's full name.
 - A current provincial license
 - Original licensing province number
 - A documented list of all immunizers having signed the directive needed to perform the immunization task.
3. **Evaluation framework:** All employers of immunizers will have an evaluation framework in place to review and assess staff competencies at regular intervals and refer to the example provided in [Appendix B - Immunization Competency Review Template](#).

4. **Delegated immunization services:** Allied Health Care professionals who are delegated to assist in administering vaccines in a pandemic (ex: but not limited to physiotherapists, respiratory therapists) must have completed during their core health education, at minimum, the following two courses: intramuscular injections and anatomy and physiology.
 - Allied Health Care Professionals services may be required during a rapid immunization deployment to increase the capacity to immunize a targeted population.
 - These health care professionals must be aware of their professional liability and check with their association and employer to ensure that this reassignment of duties is compliant and legal as these falls outside their regular area of practice (i.e., vaccine administration).
5. **Immunization errors:** All employers of immunizers will have a policy in place to identify and manage vaccine errors and refer to [Management of Vaccine Errors and Deviations in Administration for all Immunizers](#).
6. **Adverse events following immunization (AEFI):** When an adverse events occurs following immunization (note: this is not for vaccine errors), all immunizers will complete and submit an AEFI form and refer to [Adverse Events Following Immunization \(AEFIs\)](#).
7. **Anaphylaxis management:** All immunizers will be competent in anaphylaxis management and refer to [Management of Anaphylaxis and Other Reactions Following Immunizations in Non-Hospital Settings](#).
8. **Vaccine transportation:** Both those who administer vaccines and those Health Care Professionals who do not administer vaccines but are asked to transport vaccines (**including non-health care professionals**) must be competent in transportation and handling of vaccines. Refer to [Vaccine Storage and Handling](#) located in the NBIPG.

¹ The term “community health nurses” refers to those nurses working in First Nations communities.

² In NB current authorized prescribers include physicians, nurse practitioners, optometrists, dentists, pharmacists, and midwives.

Appendix A – Immunization Competency Requirements for all Immunizers Administering Vaccines in New-Brunswick

Depending on the area of immunization, the requirements may differ. Immunizers share the responsibility with their employer to ensure they have the knowledge and expertise to administer vaccines safely and competently.

A. All immunizers are to:

- Maintain ongoing education in their practice and stay up to date with current provincial immunization recommendations.
- Maintain CPR skills through refresher training and certifications at east every 1-2 years based on employer policies or professional liabilities/obligations.
- Maintain current anaphylaxis treatment practices through annual refresher courses. Refer to [Management of Anaphylaxis and Other Reactions Following Immunizations in Non-Hospital Settings](#).
- For those who require signing a directive, give a new signed copy to your employer **yearly**. Refer to the NBIPG [Directive and Provision of all Immunization Services](#).

B. Depending on your work environment, the designated person assigned will ensure all immunizers delivering vaccines in New-Brunswick, have completed section A and:

- Completed all modules of a recognized learning program noted in this Policy (*Immunization Competency Standards for All Immunization Providers*).
- Provide a copy of their certification to their employer.
- Immunizers who have not previously completed all EPIC modules (or from another recognized training program) will be required at their next competency review, to provide proof of completion of the program (i.e., completed all course modules) to their employer.
- New immunizers will acquire initial immunization experience by participating in supervised vaccine clinic until competency is obtained.
- Initial competency review will be done at a minimum of 3, 6 and 12 months. It may include additional assessments on an as needed basis (as determined by the designated person) and competency reviews **must be completed at least every 2 years thereafter**. Refer to [Appendix B - Immunization Competency Review Template](#).
- In some settings, the immunizer may require more frequent competency reviews (example yearly) based on their program responsibilities and/or how often they immunize in their practice. The frequency of reviews will be determined by employer policy/designated person.

Note: New-Brunswick's authorized prescribers¹ have autonomous immunization practice, however, will have a framework in place to complete regular competency reviews. They follow their respective regulatory college's/association standards and conditions needed for their immunization practice.

- C. For rapid vaccine deployment or casual hires with purpose to increase immunization capacity (ex. pandemic response, communicable disease outbreaks or school clinics) these immunizers will initially be categorized as being either “experienced” or “novice”.

Experienced Immunizers:

Have already achieved full immunization competency (i.e., section B). The designated person assigned to review each immunizer’s competency, will ensure that all immunization requirements in their respective practice have been reached prior to deployment.

Novice immunizers:

Have either never administered a vaccine or more than two years have elapsed since their last competency review/vaccine administration. Prior to deployment or casual hire, the designated person assigned to review each immunizer’s competency, will ensure section A is complete and the following:

- The person **must have completed** the following two core courses: Intramuscular Injections and Anatomy and Physiology, during their basic health training. These core courses are essential.
- Complete the **minimum of 4 essential immunization modules**² from the EPIC learning program (or from another recognized training program). A copy of the completed essential modules will be provided to the employer.
- Has acquired supervised immunization experience by participating in vaccine clinic until competency is obtained. It may include additional assessments on an as needed basis (as determined by the designated person). Refer to [Appendix B - Immunization Competency Review Template](#).
- If immunizing only during pandemic responses or to increase immunization capacity (school clinics or outbreaks) and not employed in a regular immunization work setting, **immunizer competency reviews must be completed at least every 2 years**. If in some circumstances, the immunizer become employed on a continual basis, the designated person assigned will ensure that section B will be completed at the employee’s next competency review.

¹ In NB current authorized prescribers include physicians, nurse practitioners, optometrists, dentists, pharmacists and midwives.

² Complete the minimal following 4 modules through the Education Program for Immunization Competencies (EPIC): Adverse Events Following Immunization; Documentation; Populations Requiring Special Considerations; Administration of Immunizing Agents.

Appendix B – Immunization Competency Review Template

Date: _____ Immunizer's name: _____

Reviewer's name: _____ Setting/Clinic: _____

Goal: To assure maintenance of a safe and competent immunization practice.

How to use this template?

Identify and define the specific segment of health professionals you will be assessing and use the following scale to identify the level of proficiency for each learning objective.

- **Aware** indicates a basic level of mastery of the competency, in which individuals are able to identify the concept or skill but have a relatively limited ability to perform the skill.
- **Knowledgeable** indicates an intermediate level of mastery of the competency, in which individuals are able to apply and describe the skill.
- **Proficient** indicates an advanced level of mastery of the competency, in which individuals are able to synthesize, critique, or teach the skill.
- **N/A** Some competencies are not mandatory depending on the scope of practice of each vaccinator.

Communication	Aware	Knowledgeable	Proficient	N/A
Competency: Communicates effectively about immunization.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcomes client/guardian, introduces self and states professional designation and establishes rapport. 2. Confirms 2 client identifiers e.g.name and date of birth. 3. Responds appropriately to client/guardian concerns and provides evidence-based information and resources based on age. 4. Delivers clear, concise messages about the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases and the benefits and risks of vaccines while accommodating language or literacy barriers and special needs of client/guardian. 5. Provides guidance to clients so they can correctly identify credible sources of information and dispel myths or misinformation regarding immunization and vaccines. 6. Responds appropriately to the concern that giving too many vaccines will overload the immune system. 7. Explains what vaccines will be given and which types of injection(s) will be done. 8. Obtains/verifies informed consent. 9. Reviews comfort measures and after care instructions with client, inviting questions. 				
Comments:				

Storage and Handling of Immunization Agents	Aware	Knowledgeable	Proficient	N/A
Competency: Implements the New Brunswick Immunization Program Guide's policies, standards and guidelines when storing, handling, or transporting vaccine.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensures that the vaccine fridge/cooler temperature is within the recommended range. 2. States where to access the policies and guidelines on storage, handling and transportation, including in a power failure. 3. Demonstrates the importance of maximizing the potency and efficacy of each vaccine by protecting from light and temperatures outside the recommended stability range and checks vial/ampule expiration dates. 4. Explains appropriate actions to report and manage a cold chain excursion if it occurs or other insults that compromise vaccine integrity. 				
Comments:				
Administration of Immunization Agents	Aware	Knowledgeable	Proficient	N/A
Competency: Prepares and administers immunization agents correctly.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completes pre-immunization assessment for each client including precautions, contraindications, and indications for rescheduling. 2. Ensures the seven "Rights" of immunization: right drug, right client, right dose, right time, right route, right reason, and right documentation. 3. Names the resources that are used to guide the decision-making process for the recommended vaccine. 4. Washes hands pre/post administration of vaccine. 5. Maintains aseptic technique throughout procedure. 6. Utilizes an appropriate method to keep syringes identified. 7. Demonstrates the steps involved in vaccine preparation, including reconstitution, if necessary, administration and disposal. 8. Demonstrates age-appropriate injection sites, techniques for immunization (e.g., non-aspiration) and proper client positioning. 9. Chooses the correct syringe, needle length and gauge for the age and size of the client. 10. Demonstrates actions that increase safety in the clinic related to the provider, recipient and the environment i.e., positioning, immediate sharps disposal, fall prevention. 11. Demonstrates the ability to describe live attenuate versus inactivated agents and components that may be present in a vaccine product (e.g., adjuvants, preservatives, additives). 12. Demonstrates age-appropriate techniques to reduce pain during immunization e.g., breastfeeding. 				

Comments:				
Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI)	Aware	Knowledge - able	Proficient	N/A
Competency: Anticipates, identifies, and manages adverse events following immunization	✓	✓	✓	✓
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assesses risks for falls and intervenes appropriately. 2. Explains step-by-step response to anaphylaxis and policy resource. Ensures anaphylaxis kit including algorithm is available and contents are not expired. 3. Informs client/guardian of the normal reactions after immunization and appropriate care. 4. Informs client/guardian very rare reactions, when to seek medical attention and to report to Public Health. 5. Report and document any adverse event following immunization as outlined in the New Brunswick Immunization Program Guide. 6. Ensures that incident reporting is completed as per policy if needed. 				
Comments:				
Documentation	Aware	Knowledge - able	Proficient	N/A
Competency: Documents information relevant to each immunization encounter in accordance with Provincial guidelines for immunization practices.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describes the role and importance of immunization records to client. 2. Identifies the information to be documented on an immunization record. 3. Documents accurately and completely on immunization records and /or other location when applicable (e.g., consent form). 4. Documents withdrawal of consent as outlined in the NB Immunization Program Guide. (PHN and FN only) 5. Documents the reason when a scheduled vaccine is not given and follow-up action plan. 6. If a vaccine administration error or deviation of provincial recommendations occur, ensures appropriate documentation and action per the policy outlined in the New Brunswick Immunization Program Guide. Ensures that incident reporting is completed as per employer policy if needed. 				
Comments:				

Populations requiring special considerations	Aware	Knowledge - able	Proficient	N/A
Competency: Recognizes and responds to the unique immunization needs of certain population groups.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>1. Identifies the unique immunization needs of a client such as, but not limited to (and applicable to the clinic setting), those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Off course of a recommended schedule ▪ Who have had a serious adverse event following a prior immunization. ▪ Who are immunocompromised, with certain medical conditions including transplant recipients. ▪ Outreach or “hard to reach” populations. ▪ Pregnant or breastfeeding ▪ Travelers, foreign workers ▪ New residents or international students to New Brunswick <p>2. Refers appropriately to the designated expert professionals/resources when required to address immunization needs of certain populations.</p>				
Comments:				
Supervision of 3 age specific vaccine administration	Date#1	Date #2	Date #3	Extra
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult vaccine administrations (aged 12 and over) and/or; <input type="checkbox"/> Pediatric vaccine administrations (aged 3-11 years old) and/or; <input type="checkbox"/> Pediatric vaccine administrations (under 3 years old)				
Has provided a certificate of completion with a recognized immunization learning program per NBIPG Immunization Competency Standards and Requirements for All Immunization Providers	YES	NO	N/A	N/A
<p>I am satisfied that the person named-above has successfully completed the pandemic immunization training and has demonstrated competency to perform the above-mentioned immunization-related tasks.</p> <p>Designated person’s signature: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Employee signature: _____</p> <p>Next competency review date: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ensure this information is in personnel portfolio and review as necessary</p>				