

11 August 2022

John Smith
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Tēnā koe John,

Your Official Information Act request, reference H2022007347:

Thank you for your email of 12 July 2022 requesting information relating to the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order (the Order). You requested:

“Could you please supply to me the number of nurses who have lost their jobs at district health boards due to Covid-19 vaccine mandates.”

As you know, the Government has made COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for the health and disability workforce. Staff were required to have their first COVID-19 vaccination by 16 November 2021, their second vaccination by 1 January 2022, and a booster vaccination within six months of the second vaccination. It is important to note that the Order was not intended to curtail any New Zealander’s freedoms, rights or health. Rather, it was introduced to protect vulnerable people from being exposed to severe illness following exposure to COVID-19. Considering the important roles undertaken by healthcare workers, and the population groups they work with, as well as their whānau and members of the wider community, it is critical for staff working in this sector to be vaccinated.

As we have with all our COVID-19 response settings, we are keeping the scope of the Order under regular review, using the latest data and evidence as it becomes available to us. As you may be aware, from 11.59pm 7 July 2022, workers who are not public facing in certain healthcare environments and/or do not provide healthcare services directly to patients will no longer be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

As at 27 June 2022, the employment of 399 nurses and midwives have been terminated as a result of Vaccination Order. A further 61 have resigned, and another 161 have been stood down. Nurses and midwives as an occupational grouping are combined.

Please be assured that those healthcare workers who did not wish to be vaccinated against COVID-19 were still supported by their employers (Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand, formerly District Health Boards) when vaccine mandates were introduced. Employers provided at least four weeks paid leave for these individuals to receive the appropriate COVID-19 vaccination before their contracts were terminated. It is also important to note that when businesses and workforces are at a particular risk of a significant disruption of their services because their employees have not met the mandated vaccinated timeframe as prescribed in the Order, employers can apply for a Significant Service Disruption (SSD) exemption.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. You are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may decide to proactively release a copy of this response on Te Whatu Ora's website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku noa, nā



Rachel Mackay

Acting Director

National Immunisation Programme

