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# Media Release

For Immediate Release

## Local hospitals jointly issue vaccine mandate for all staff, volunteers and contractors

**Waterloo Region & Wellington County | September 1, 2021** – Effective October 12, staff, physicians, students, volunteers and contractors working at and with local hospitals will be required to be fully vaccinated. Staff who do not meet this will be placed on leave without pay and given a short window into early-November to meet the policy. The new mandate is a joint initiative between Cambridge Memorial Hospital, Grand River Hospital, Groves Memorial Community Hospital, Guelph General Hospital, Homewood Health Centre, North Wellington Health Care Alliance and St. Mary's General Hospital as part of new vaccination policies implemented locally.

[Directive 6 issued by Ontario's chief medical officer of health](#) mandates that high risk settings, such as hospitals, must have COVID-19 vaccination policies in place by September 7, 2021. To protect both staff and patients, local hospitals are working together to ensure healthcare can continue to be delivered as safely as possible in our community. As part of these new policies, area hospitals announced last month that new staff and volunteers hired as of this date would be required to be fully vaccinated. The move to extend mandatory vaccinations to all existing physicians, staff, contractors, students and volunteers is the next step forward towards the implementation of the new vaccination policies.

"Protecting the health and safety of our patients and staff has always been our priority," says Lee Fairclough, president, St. Mary's General Hospital and hospital lead for COVID response. "Vaccines are an important tool in the COVID fight and in our response to the highly transmissible Delta variant—something that we have witnessed the impact of first-hand. We are pleased that vaccination rates are high within our hospitals and community and are very grateful to everyone who has chosen to become fully vaccinated. It is our responsibility to implement every safety measure possible to protect our patients and teams."

As outlined in the new policies that come into effect September 7<sup>th</sup>, existing staff and volunteers who are unvaccinated will be required to undergo a mandatory education session along with twice-weekly antigen testing submitting negative test results prior to coming on-

site. As of October 12<sup>th</sup>, anyone working with or at the hospitals must be fully vaccinated or have submitted a medical or legislated exemption. Staff that do not meet this will be on a leave without pay and have until early-November to meet the policy.

“Our response throughout the pandemic has been a collaborative approach across our community as we continue to protect our patients and our staff,” says Patrick Gaskin, president and CEO, Cambridge Memorial Hospital. “Our new joint vaccination policies are simply one more important step forward that we are taking to achieve this, together.”

The move towards mandatory vaccinations is a strategy also being implemented by many local businesses, educational institutions and organizations along with other health care organizations.

“Patient and staff safety are priorities for us,” says Marianne Walker, president and chief executive officer, Guelph General Hospital. “We want to do everything possible to protect our patients, our staff and the health of the community, and we know that vaccines are critical in reducing the spread of the virus.”

Anyone wishing to become fully vaccinated can book an appointment or attend a walk-in clinic offered through [Region of Waterloo Public Health](#), [Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health](#), pharmacies or other healthcare providers.

“The COVID-19 vaccine is a vital measure of protection, particularly as more services continue to open up, and community spread continues to increase,” says Ron Gagnon, president and chief executive officer, Grand River Hospital. “As a health care organization, we have a responsibility to safeguard and protect the health and wellness of those we work with, and those we care for. This policy, which we are implementing with our partners, will help to support this mandate and keep our community safe.”

“We encourage anyone in our community that has not made the choice yet to get vaccinated, to do so. Becoming fully vaccinated is one of the ways in which we can all do our part to protect our family, friends and neighbours,” says Fairclough.

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### **More Information:**

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