

Christian Horizons' Organizational Statement on Vaccines and COVID-19 Response Measures

COVID-19 and People with Developmental Disabilities

Christian Horizons promotes communities of belonging for people who experience disabilities. As such, the COVID-19 pandemic presents significant challenges to our mission. Multiple aspects to these challenges include:

- Heightened [bioethical concerns](#) surrounding healthcare triaging and disability
- Additional [health risks](#) to people with developmental disabilities and systemic barriers to [accessing healthcare](#)
- Stringent public health restrictions for people with developmental disabilities who live in [publicly-funded group living environments](#)

People with developmental disabilities have encountered disproportionately high adverse COVID-19 effects and deaths, and we continue to grieve the losses in our community. In-person interactions with friends and family have been limited by necessity, and many people have experienced profound isolation. At times, due to provincial mandates and public health legislation, people who use our services have been restricted to staying home or even confined to their bedrooms for 14-day quarantine periods.

Christian Horizons has adapted, and we are grateful that many people who use our services have learned to connect with their friends and loved ones in new and creative ways. Yet, the virus continues to pose increased risks to people with developmental disabilities. Sector restrictions, while necessary, are stringent, and opportunities to be fully involved in community spaces are reduced due to the heightened dangers of infection.

Our Position

Based on the current situation and our values shaped by the Christian faith tradition, we strongly advocate for community public health measures including vaccination. We believe that vaccination, along with continued precautions such as masking, social distancing, and hygiene practices, will help people who are elderly, immunocompromised, or disabled safely resume full engagement in society.

As an international ministry, we urge our government and other countries with the means to continue to support vaccination efforts around the world, as the pandemic has highlighted global inequity in new ways. We call on our partners and friends to consider the needs and desires of people with developmental disabilities and to respond, and advocate, accordingly.

Now that vaccines are readily available, we look forward to a time where people with developmental disabilities can safely and fully re-engage with their friends, communities, and worshipping congregations.

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Our Motivation

From its beginning, the values, vision, and mission of Christian Horizons have been motivated and shaped by the example of Jesus Christ in Christian Scripture.

- Christ's self-giving love sets a relevant moral example for everyone in our communities to, "in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3-4, NIV). As such, Christian Horizons believes it is imperative to take actions both individually and as a society to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These actions help make it possible for people with disabilities to safely resume in-person activities in their roles as citizens, employees, volunteers, and people of faith.
- Those who identify as Christians are further challenged by Jesus' command to "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34, NIV). John later describes that Jesus demonstrated this love in sacrificing his life for us, "And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" (1 John 3:16, NIV). While complying with public health mandates seldom involves death, there are times when being inconvenienced or taking risks ourselves so that others can be welcomed back into community displays a measure of Christ-shaped sacrificial love.

Our fundamental belief in a relational God who demonstrates His love for His children through Christ's death and resurrection means that we desire more than ever for people who use our services to be safely welcomed back into full community participation, contributing in so many ways including into their churches and faith communities.