



Prioritisation: Covid-19 Vaccine rollout for staff at special care centres for children with severe to profound intellectual disability



Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disability

WESKAAP FORUM VIR INTELLEKTUELE GESTREMDHEID — IQUMRHU LE NTSHONA KOLONI LOKHUBAZEKO NGENGOQONDO

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Motivation: Prioritisation of Covid-19 vaccination for staff serving children with severe to profound intellectual (neuro-developmental) disability

1. Persons with severe to profound intellectual disability have, in layman's terms, an IQ below 34; impairments in adaptive function and often have multiple disabilities or impairments (e.g. cerebral palsy and/or feeding; speech and breathing impairments and/or epilepsy; and /or visual and/or hearing impairments or disabilities)
2. They are systemically excluded from public schools and attend independent NGOs called special care centres that are under-funded and under-resourced.
3. Children with neuro-developmental disability are at risk of more severe or fatal Covid-19.
4. Research on the safety of the Covid-19 vaccine for children appears to be incomplete and inconclusive, although children in this vulnerable group are prioritised for flu vaccinations (e.g. in UK)
5. Vaccination of those who provide services to them (e.g. at education centres) is recommended to limit the potential of infecting this vulnerable group of children.

Vulnerability of children with severe to profound intellectual disability (neurodisabilities)

Considering all the data so far, **children with varying degrees and severities of neurodisabilities appear to be over-represented among the small number of cases reported with severe or fatal COVID-19.** Given the well-described high risk of large outbreaks in closed institutional settings, one potential group that might **benefit from early immunisation could be children with severe neurodisabilities ... residing in or in regular attendance at special educational needs or disabilities schools and colleges, paediatric rehabilitation centres, residential schools and care homes for such children.** This might give direct protection against COVID-19 in settings where many of the most vulnerable of children might be together. This is also a well-defined group that could easily be identified for targeted immunisation in the early vaccine deployment stage. This same cohort of children with severe and profound learning disability form part of the group with chronic neurological diseases that is recommended for annual influenza vaccination in the UK.

<https://adc.bmj.com/content/archdischild/early/2021/01/04/archdischild-2020-321225.full.pdf>

Vaccination of workers can reduce transmission to vulnerable groups (e.g. those with severe to profound intellectual disability)

Frontline health and social care workers are at increased personal risk of exposure to infection with COVID-19 and of transmitting that infection to susceptible and vulnerable patients in health and social care settings. The committee considers **frontline health and social care workers who provide care to vulnerable people a high priority for vaccination.** Protecting them protects the health and social care service and recognises the risks that they face in this service. **Even a small reduction in transmission arising from vaccination would add to the benefits of vaccinating this population, by reducing transmission from health and social care workers to multiple vulnerable patients and other staff members. ...** home workers are therefore considered a very high priority for vaccination.

[Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation UK](#)



VISIT

CONTACT

JOIN



www.wcfid.co.za



admin@wcfid.co.za



www.facebook.com/wcfid

Vanessa Japtha
advocacy@wcfid.co.za

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