



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

Date: January 8, 2021

To: All Priests, Principals and Lay Employees of the Diocese of Honolulu

From: Dara Perreira, Director of Human Resources

Re: COVID-19 Vaccinations for clergy, lay employees and volunteers

As you may know, the COVID-19 vaccination plans for the State of Hawaii are currently being implemented with a tiered system of priority recipients. The State is now moving from front line workers including health care, first responders, etc. to other essential personnel including educators. Here are some common questions that are being asked regarding the vaccinations related to clergy, lay employees and volunteers of the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii (RCCH) and its parishes and schools.

Please note that this FAQ list DOES NOT include information regarding vaccines for individuals of a certain age or health condition that is included in the vaccination distribution plans. This information is for individuals and their service capacity with the Catholic Church.

For information on the State of Hawaii vaccine plans, go to [COVID-19 Vaccine - Hawai'i DOH: Info & Resources for Managing COVID-19 \(hawaiicovid19.com\)](https://www.hawaii.gov/doh/COVID-19/)

Q: Does receiving the vaccine change our current way of operating in our parishes and schools (i.e. wearing masks, social distancing, etc.)?

A: No. All current COVID-19 protocols related to how schools and parishes operate must be continued. Vaccines will not change our policy of wearing masks, social distancing, sanitizing and cleaning protocols, singing at Mass or policies at schools for maintaining classroom “bubbles” to minimize risk of spreading COVID-19. The State of Hawaii and its counties will inform us of any changes in the future.

Q: Are clergy members included as essential personnel eligible now for a vaccination?

A: Generally, no. At this time, our understanding is only those clergy members who serve as the pastor or related staff of a school are considered “educators” and are able to be listed as recipients with their assigned school. For those currently involved in hospital ministry or hospice, you must inquire with the organization(s) where you are ministering.

Q: Are volunteers included as essential personnel?

A: Maybe. Only those volunteers who regularly serve in schools as school staff may be eligible at this time. These volunteers should inquire with their school to determine whether or not they would be eligible.

Q: The federal government is allowing employers the ability to mandate vaccinations for employees (with some exceptions) as a work requirement. Will the Roman Catholic Church and its parish and school locations mandate the vaccine for clergy, employees and volunteers?

A: No. RCCH will not mandate vaccines for anyone but strongly recommends those who are eligible to receive it to do so. It is a personal choice.

Q: Am I required to inform my supervisor at my school or parish that I received the vaccine?

A: Currently, you do not need to inform your supervisor. However, if you need time off from work to attend an appointment to receive the vaccine because the distribution is scheduled during work time and cannot be scheduled during non-work hours, please work with your supervisor so that arrangements can be made for coverage.

Q: What about our Catholic teaching as it relates to possible fetal cells from aborted children being used in the vaccine?

A: Please see the attached letter from Bishop Larry Silva for more information.