

NEWS RELEASE

Informed Consent, the COVID-19 Vaccine and the Public Guardian and Trustee

VANCOUVER, MARCH 8, 2021 – With the provincial COVID-19 immunization strategy underway, obtaining informed consent for administering the vaccine, particularly for incapable adults, is an important aspect of the vaccination process.

In British Columbia, the [Health Care \(Consent\) and Care Facility \(Admission\) Act \(HCCCFAA\)](#) sets out that, in most situations, health care providers must obtain informed consent prior to administering a health care treatment. If an adult is not capable of providing consent for the COVID-19 immunization, their substitute decision maker may provide consent on their behalf. In some situations, where there are no willing, able or qualified family or friends available to act as substitute decision makers, the Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT) may be able to authorize a substitute or make the decision on behalf of the adult.

“The PGT is here to ensure that an informed decision is made on behalf of adults who may not be capable of making the decision on their own. We want to support the immunization strategy and are readily available to facilitate an adult’s access to the vaccine by acting as a substitute when necessary,” said Kevin Coughlin, Manager of Personal Decision Services with the PGT.

Whenever possible, the PGT consults with the adult and any person who is involved in the adult's care to gather information and determine whether the adult expressed a prior capable wish that would apply to the COVID-19 vaccine. The PGT relies on the expertise of health care providers, service providers and physicians to inform this decision, including advice and direction from the BC Centre for Disease Control.

For more information about the PGT’s role in obtaining consent for COVID-19 immunization on behalf of incapable adults, go to [Informed Consent and the COVID-19 Vaccine](#).

About the Public Guardian and Trustee

The Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT) is a corporation sole established under the *Public Guardian and Trustee Act* with a unique statutory role to protect the interests of British Columbians who lack legal capacity to protect their own interests. The mandate of the PGT is to:

- Protect the legal and financial interests of children under the age of 19 years;
- Protect the legal, financial, personal and health care interests of adults who require assistance in decision making; and
- Administer the estates of deceased and missing persons.

During 2019-2020, the PGT’s Personal Decision Services department served

approximately 700 clients and made approximately 100 major health care decisions for incapable adults in British Columbia. To date the PGT, has reviewed over 500 requests on behalf of incapable adults for COVID-19 related immunizations.

For more information about the PGT, visit www.trustee.bc.ca.

Media contact

Sunny Virk

svirk@trustee.bc.ca

D: 604.660.4670

C: 604.652.4416