



September 14, 2021

PA-2021-19

Policy Alert

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement for Immigration Medical Examination

Purpose

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is updating guidance in the [USCIS Policy Manual](#) regarding health-related grounds of inadmissibility in accordance with recently updated requirements issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The updated guidance, which is effective October 1, 2021, requires applicants subject to the immigration medical examination to submit COVID-19 vaccination records before completion of immigration medical examinations conducted in the United States and overseas.

Background

In general, those applying to become a lawful permanent resident, and other applicants as required, must undergo an immigration medical examination to show they are free from any conditions that would render them inadmissible under health-related grounds.¹ USCIS designates eligible physicians as civil surgeons to perform this immigration medical examination for those applying within the United States using the Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record ([Form I-693](#)).

On August 17, 2021, the CDC released an update to the [Vaccination Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#), requiring applicants subject to the immigration medical examination to complete the COVID-19 vaccine series (currently one or two doses, depending on formulation) and provide documentation of vaccination to the civil surgeon before completion of the immigration medical examination.

This update, contained in Volumes 8 and 9 of the Policy Manual, is effective October 1, 2021, and applies prospectively to all Forms I-693 signed by a civil surgeon on or after that date. The guidance contained in the Policy Manual is controlling and supersedes any related prior guidance.

Policy Highlights

- Explains that, beginning October 1, 2021, applicants who are required to undergo the immigration medical examination must complete the COVID-19 vaccine series before the civil surgeon can complete the immigration medical examination and sign Form I-693.

¹ See [INA 232](#) and [8 CFR 232](#) (immigration medical examination). See [INA 212\(a\)\(1\)](#) (health-related grounds of inadmissibility).

- Explains that the civil surgeon may indicate that a blanket waiver could apply in cases where the COVID-19 vaccine is not age appropriate, where it is contraindicated, or where it is not routinely available in the state where the civil surgeon practices or where it is limited in supply and would cause significant delay for the applicant to receive the vaccination.

Citation

Volume 8: Admissibility, Part B, Health-Related Grounds of Inadmissibility, Chapter 9, Vaccination Requirement [[8 USCIS-PM B.9](#)]; and Volume 9: Waivers and Other Forms of Relief, Part D, Health-Related Grounds of Inadmissibility, Chapter 3, Waiver of Immigrant Vaccination Requirement [[9 USCIS-PM D.3](#)].

This policy is effective on October 1, 2021 and will be incorporated into the Policy Manual accordingly.

Chapter 9. Vaccination Requirement

A. Vaccination Requirements for Immigrants

Some vaccines are expressly required by statute. Others are required because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have determined they are in the interest of public health.¹

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)² specifies the following vaccinations:

- Mumps, measles, rubella;
- Polio;
- Tetanus and diphtheria toxoids;³
- Pertussis;
- Haemophilus influenza type B; and
- Hepatitis B.

CDC requires the following additional vaccines for immigration purposes:

- Varicella;
- Influenza;
- Pneumococcal pneumonia;
- Rotavirus;
- Hepatitis A;
- Meningococcal; and
- COVID-19.

¹ Effective December 14, 2009, CDC changed its methods on how to assess which vaccines should be required for immigration purposes. This led to changes in the list of required vaccines; some that were required prior to 2009 are no longer required since December 14, 2009.

² See [INA 212\(a\)\(1\)\(A\)\(ii\)](#).

³ Applicants who have completed the initial DTP/DTaP/DT or Td/Tdap series should receive a Td/Tdap booster shot every 10 years. If the last dose was received more than 10 years ago, the applicant is required to have the booster shot, otherwise the applicant is inadmissible under [INA 212\(a\)\(1\)\(A\)\(ii\)](#).

If the applicant has not received any of the listed vaccinations and the vaccinations are age-appropriate and medically appropriate, the applicant has a Class A condition and is inadmissible. Generally, all age-appropriate vaccine rows of the vaccination assessment must have at least one entry before the assessment can be considered to have been properly completed. However, the COVID-19 vaccination (required as of October 1, 2021) differs in that the applicant must complete the entire vaccine series (one or two doses depending on formulation).⁴

B. Blanket Waiver if Vaccine is “Not Medically Appropriate”

1. Definition of “Not Medically Appropriate”

The term “not medically appropriate” applies to:⁵

* * *

2. Pregnancy or an Immuno-Compromised Condition⁶

* * *

3. Blanket Waiver due to Nationwide Vaccination Shortage

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4. Vaccines Not Routinely Available

Civil surgeons should annotate “not routinely available” on Form I-693 if the COVID-19 vaccine is not routinely available in the state where the civil surgeon practices. In addition, if the vaccine is available to the applicant but due to limited supply, it would cause significant delay for the applicant to receive the vaccination, then the civil surgeon should also annotate “not routinely available” on Form I-693.⁷ USCIS may grant a blanket waiver in these cases.

Generally, “national vaccination shortage” principles do not apply overseas. In the context of overseas vaccinations, the term panel physicians use to indicate the unavailability of a vaccine

⁴ For more information, including current dosage requirements for the immigration medical examination, see the [CDC Requirements for Immigrant Medical Examinations: COVID-19 Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#) webpage.

⁵ For more information, see the “Blanket Waivers Applicable to COVID-19 vaccinations” section of the [CDC Requirements for Immigrant Medical Examinations: COVID-19 Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#).

⁶ Immuno-compromised condition refers to a medical state that does not allow the body to fight off infection.

⁷ For more information, see the [CDC Requirements for Immigrant Medical Examinations: COVID-19 Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#).

is “not routinely available.” Therefore, if the adjustment applicant is permitted to use the vaccination assessment completed overseas,⁸ then officers should not find the applicant inadmissible solely based on the lack of the vaccine(s) that is “not routinely available.” Officers should also not issue an RFE for corrective action. USCIS may grant a blanket waiver in these cases.

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F. Completion of the Results Section by the Civil Surgeon

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Vaccination Record: Explanation of Results	
Applicant may be eligible for blanket waiver(s) as indicated above	* * *
Applicant will request an individual waiver based on religious or moral convictions	<p>If an applicant objects to vaccines based on religious or moral convictions, the "Applicant will request an individual waiver based on religious or moral convictions" box must be checked.⁹</p> <p>This is not a blanket waiver, and the applicant will have to submit a waiver request on Form I-601.</p> <p>Even if the applicant otherwise requires a blanket waiver(s), the civil surgeon must check this box, and not the box titled “Applicants may be eligible for blanket waivers.” It may be, however, that the civil surgeon checks both boxes, in which case, the officer should just request the waiver documentation that establishes the religious or moral conviction.</p>

⁸ See Chapter 3, Applicability of Medical Examination and Vaccination Requirement [[8 USCIS-PM B.3](#)] for more information on applicants who may use the vaccination assessment completed overseas for adjustment purposes.

⁹ The applicant needs to demonstrate opposition to vaccinations in all forms, not just certain vaccinations. See Volume 9, Waivers and Other Forms of Relief, Part D, Health-Related Grounds of Inadmissibility, Chapter 3, Waiver of Immigrant Vaccination Requirement, Section E, Waiver due to Religious Belief or Moral Conviction [[9 USCIS-PM D.3\(E\)](#)].

Vaccination Record: Explanation of Results	
Vaccine history complete for each vaccine, all requirements met	* * *
Applicant does not meet immunization requirements	* * *

USCIS Policy Manual, Volume 9: Waivers and Other Forms of Relief
[Part D - Health-Related Grounds of Inadmissibility](#)

Chapter 3. Waiver of Immigrant Vaccination Requirement

D. Blanket Waiver if Vaccine is “Not Medically Appropriate”¹⁰

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1. Situations Specified in the Law¹¹

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2. Nationwide Vaccination Shortage¹²

USCIS may grant a blanket waiver in the case of a vaccination shortage only if CDC recommends that USCIS should do so, and USCIS has published the appropriate guidance on its website. CDC only makes such a recommendation to USCIS after verifying that there is indeed a nationwide vaccination shortage and issuing the appropriate statement on its website for civil surgeons. In turn, USCIS issues the appropriate statement on its website.

Additionally, civil surgeons should annotate “not routinely available” on Form I-693 if the COVID-19 vaccine is not routinely available in the state where the civil surgeon practices. In addition, if the vaccine is available to the applicant but due to limited supply, and it would

¹⁰ See [INA 212\(g\)\(2\)\(B\)](#).

¹¹ See Volume 8, Admissibility, Part B, Health-Related Grounds of Inadmissibility, Chapter 9, Vaccination Requirement [[8 USCIS-PM B.9](#)].

¹² See Volume 8, Admissibility, Part B, Health-Related Grounds of Inadmissibility, Chapter 9, Vaccination Requirement [[8 USCIS-PM B.9](#)] for more information on blanket waivers based on a nationwide vaccination shortage.

cause significant delay for the applicant to receive the vaccination, then the civil surgeon should also annotate “not routinely available” on Form I-693.¹³ USCIS may grant a blanket waiver in these cases.

The term “nationwide vaccine shortage” does not apply to the medical examination conducted by a panel physician overseas. If a vaccine is not available in the applicant’s country, the panel physician annotates the vaccination assessment with the term “not routinely available.” If an officer encounters this annotation, the officer may grant a blanket waiver based on this annotation alone.

E. Waiver due to Religious Belief or Moral Conviction¹⁴

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¹³ For more information, see the [CDC Requirements for Immigrant Medical Examinations: COVID-19 Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#).

¹⁴ See [INA 212\(g\)\(2\)\(C\)](#).