

13 April 2022

C149388

Chuck Schooner

fyi-request-18898-d91821b4@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Chuck

Thank you for your email of 16 March 2021 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about COVID-19 vaccinations in prison. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested:

Total Number of Prisoners
Total Number of Prisoners vaccinated

The number of people in prison who have received the COVID-19 vaccination is available on Corrections' website at the following link:

https://www.corrections.govt.nz/news/corrections_covid-19_update/vaccination_update

This information is regularly updated and is broken down by dose number and prison. A snapshot of the prison population is also available at this link. Note that the prison population fluctuates daily due to arrests, releases, court decisions and transfers.

Any incentives/bribes provided to prisoners to take the vaccination
Any coercive techniques used to get prisoners vaccinated - such as prisoners not getting fed, prisoners put in solitary confinement, prisoners not allowed outside and or any other discriminatory practices used to get prisoners to take vaccine.

Corrections knows that getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is the best thing that we can all do to keep ourselves, the people we manage, our team and our wider community safe from COVID-19. We are committed to ensuring that all of our staff and people in prison have access to the COVID-19 vaccination on an ongoing basis.

Since the launch of our vaccination programme in May 2021 we have taken a proactive approach to encourage everyone to be vaccinated against COVID-19. We have a dedicated national team overseeing our vaccination programme, and custodial and health COVID-19 vaccination leads at each prison. Comprehensive communications have been enacted throughout, which includes but is not limited to provision of information about vaccine

safety and effectiveness via a dedicated page on our internal website (for staff), information and engaging material on prisoner kiosks, Prisoner TV, forums and conversations with health staff, posters, pamphlets and other materials, including in a range of languages.

We continue to explore different means of reaching people in prison to encourage vaccination. This includes local and national initiatives and shared insights across our prisons to boost uptake of the vaccine. Initiatives include promoting word of mouth discussions with influential leaders in our prisons and culturally targeted educational forums.

Corrections ensures informed consent is always obtained from all people in prison who received the COVID-19 vaccination. As occurred at many vaccination sites across the country, some prisons provided food to people in prison following their vaccination. This included lollipops and cookies.

No individual was vaccinated following a threat of retribution. Corrections has not and will not engage in coercive behaviour to get people in prison vaccinated. Accordingly, this part of your request is declined under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist or cannot be found.

Total number of adverse reactions in prisoners or any deaths

Corrections follows Ministry of Health guidance regarding the reporting of COVID-19 vaccine side effects. This guidance requires that all incidents of anaphylaxis and rare side effects such as Myocarditis caused by the COVID-19 vaccine be reported through to a national database. As at 29 March 2022, no such adverse reactions have occurred to people in prison as a result of the COVID-19 vaccine.

More common side-effects from COVID-19 vaccination that people in prison have experienced include headaches and pain at the injection site. These more common, milder side-effects will be on the individual files of people in prison. Therefore, it would require manual assessment of these files to provide this information. As a result, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f), as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

In accordance with section 18B of the OIA, we have considered whether consulting the requestor would assist to make the request in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal. However, we do not consider that the request could be refined in this instance.

No person in prison has died as a result of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published quarterly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with Corrections. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also

raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kerry Dougall', written in a cursive style.

Kerry Dougall
Acting Deputy Chief Executive Health