

**POSITION STATEMENT
TENNESSEE BOARD OF RESPIRATORY CARE**

ADMINISTRATION OF INFLUENZA, PNEUMOCOCCAL, COVID-19 and RSV VACCINES

Pursuant to Tenn Code Ann. § 63-27-102(4)(A)(i), the practice of respiratory care means, under the supervision, control, and responsibility of a licensed physician, the performance of cardiorespiratory research, cardiorespiratory health promotion and disease prevention, and community wellness and education programs. Tenn Code Ann. §63-27-102(4)(A)(i)(a) defines a Respiratory Therapists' scope of practice to include the "administration of pharmacologic agents and medical gasses necessary to diagnose, implement treatment, promote disease prevention, and provide rehabilitation to the cardiorespiratory system." It is the position of the Tennessee Board of Respiratory Care that a respiratory therapist, under the supervision of a licensed physician, can administer disease prevention agents such as the influenza, pneumococcal, COVID-19, and RSV vaccinations.

Influenza viruses generally enter body's system through and attach to tissues in the respiratory tract. The virus is harmful and dangerous to the respiratory tract cells, causing an immune system response. If untreated, this infection can lead to pneumonia, the main cause of influenza-related death. Secondary bacterial infections can also cause severe illnesses. Administration of the influenza vaccine by respiratory therapists is considered by the Tennessee Board of Respiratory Care to be disease prevention.

Pneumococcal disease is caused by an infection in the lungs by the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. This bacterium normally resides in the sinuses and respiratory tract of healthy individuals, but it can spread to and colonize the lungs of persons with compromised or weaker immune systems. Infections by this bacterium are the most common cause of community-acquired pneumonia and meningitis among young children and the elderly. Administration of the pneumococcal vaccine by respiratory therapists is considered by the Board of Respiratory Care to be disease prevention.

Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) is a highly infectious respiratory disease which chiefly spreads through exhalation and respiration of aerosolized droplets. People infected with the virus can suffer a wide range of symptoms including severe respiratory distress and, at times, death. The rapid spread of the virus in 2020 led to a worldwide pandemic. Administration of the various Covid-19 vaccines by respiratory therapists is considered by the Tennessee Board of Respiratory Care to be disease prevention.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a highly infectious virus which spreads through respiratory droplets released when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks, or contact with contaminated surfaces such as doorknobs, toys or hands, and then touching your face. While it can infect all age groups, it is especially dangerous for infants and older adults. RSV infection is the most common cause of infant hospitalization. Older adults with chronic conditions are also at significant risk with a mortality of 5-10% for those hospitalized with RSV infection. Symptoms include sneezing, runny nose, fever, cough, wheezing, diminished appetite, and can lead to pneumonia or bronchiolitis. RSV vaccination is recommended for all adults > 75 years of age, those with chronic lung disease, pregnant mothers at least 32 weeks of gestation, and infants if their mothers were not vaccinated. Administration of the RSV vaccines by respiratory therapists is considered by the Tennessee Board of Respiratory Care to be disease prevention.

The Tennessee Board of Respiratory Care believes that the scope of practice of a respiratory therapist licensed in Tennessee includes the administration of influenza, pneumococcal, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines. A therapist must be properly trained to administer these vaccinations and do so under the supervision, control, and responsibility of a licensed physician. The Board of Respiratory Care believes that this position statement will help address the extensive needs of the citizens of Tennessee to receive vaccinations and help prevent the seasonal spread of the flu virus and its associated bacterial infections.

**ADOPTED BY A QUORUM OF THE TENNESSEE RESPIRATORY CARE BOARD ON THIS
18th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2021.**

**REVISED BY A QUORUM OF THE TENNESSEE RESPIRATORY CARE BOARD ON THIS 8th
DAY OF MAY, 2025.**

Central Policy #2160810704