

Best Practice COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Early Childhood Education and Care Services

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This information provides best practice guidance to help early childhood education and care services manage COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses, safely.

Please use this information alongside other Tasmanian Public Health guidance including *Best Practice COVID-19 Safety for Employers*.

Public Health recommends all workplaces comply with work health and safety requirements and:

- undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment
- develop and maintain policies and procedures to minimise the chances of COVID-19 and other infectious illnesses spreading within the workplace
- use best practice guidance to inform those policies and procedures.

Public Health recommendations for people with symptoms

To reduce the risk from COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses it is recommended that:

- anyone with acute (or new) respiratory symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat, and/or runny nose should stay home or away from others
- testing for COVID-19 is still important to help reduce the spread of illness and enable those who are at risk of severe disease access treatments

if people test positive to COVID-19 they should:

- stay home until their acute symptoms have resolved
- not attend hospitals, residential aged care facilities or disability residential settings as a worker or visitor for at least seven days after their positive result
- avoid large gatherings and indoor crowded places for at least seven days
- inform Public Health of their positive result if they tested positive on a rapid antigen test (RAT)
- let their workplace know they have tested positive - workplaces may have policies in place for the return to work of cases and close contacts of COVID-19
- wear a mask when indoors or on public transport if they must leave home and have symptoms.

Best practice COVID-19 control measures for early childhood education and care services

1. Planning

- Maintain and use your COVID-19 safety plan.
- Maintain your COVID-19 outbreak management plan and consider including influenza within its scope. See the *Case and Outbreak Management Framework for Tasmanian Settings* and related tools.
- Stay informed about the level of risk in the local community and control measures in place or recommended.

2. Vaccination

See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Vaccination*.

COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for people aged five years and older, including pregnant women and for those aged between 6 months and 5 years at risk of severe illness.

Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone aged six months and older, including pregnant women.

- Recommend workers and families be up to date with vaccination against COVID-19 and influenza.

3. Workers and children with symptoms

- Recommend to workers and parents/carers that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 (including fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose) should get tested for COVID-19.
- Maintain policies and procedures to manage children who develop symptoms of COVID-19 while at the service. This includes requesting that parents/carers collect children with symptoms as soon as practicable.

While children with symptoms await collection:

- support them to distance from other children where possible
- staff providing care to the child should wear a facemask
- minimise the number of workers caring for or supervising them, where possible.

4. Workers and children who test positive for COVID-19 or are close contacts of someone who has COVID-19

- Remind staff and parents/carers that people who have symptoms or test positive to COVID-19 should stay home until their symptoms resolve.
- Close contacts should stay home if they have any symptoms. If they have no symptoms they may leave home and attend early childhood education and care services.

- Remind staff that they should inform their employer if they are a close contact of a person who has tested positive to COVID-19- people who test positive

5. Ventilation

See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Ventilation*.

- Spend time outside and open doors and windows, as safe and practicable.
- Maintain and use air conditioners, heaters and other mechanical ventilation devices, as safe and appropriate.

6. Face masks

See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Face masks*.

- Maintain a supply of single-use surgical face masks for workers use.
- Support use of face masks by anyone who chooses to wear a mask or who is at risk of severe illness.
- Recommend workers wear a face mask if they are caring for a child with acute respiratory symptoms (while they await collection from the facility).

7. Support people at risk of severe illness

Those at risk of severe illness includes people who are not up to date with vaccination, people with specific underlying medical conditions, people with compromised immune systems and pregnant women.

- Identify employees at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and strategies to minimise their risk of exposure to the virus.
- Record and take account of medical advice for any child at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

8. Physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning

See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Physical Distancing* and *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Hygiene and Cleaning*.

- Remind adults in the setting to physically distance from each other when feasible. In a children's learning and care environment, physical distancing is most important between adults.
- Discourage gathering of parents at indoor arrival and departure points.
- Have processes in place to ensure hygiene practices are in line with the National Health and Medical Research Council guidance: *Staying Healthy: Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services*
- Ensure alcohol-based hand gel is readily available for workers and at entrances to the facility.

- Support children to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue then put the tissue in the rubbish; or to cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of their elbow rather than their hands.
- Teach and support children to wash their hands effectively with soap and running water on arrival, before/after meals and after toileting, blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing and using shared equipment.
- Keep tissues and rubbish bins readily available.
- Ensure appropriate cleaning and disinfection, with a focus on frequently touched surfaces. Cleaning and disinfection of toys and equipment is not required after every use.

Further information

- www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au
- Public Health:
 - email: public.health@health.tas.gov.au
 - phone: 1800 671 738

The management of COVID-19 continues to evolve, and as evidence accumulates, advice may be revised. Updates are available at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au. If any information in this factsheet is inconsistent with information on that website, please use the information online.