

# Best Practice COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Homeless and Specialty Housing Services

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This information provides best practice guidance to help homeless and specialty housing 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 recommendations 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 or disability care facilities, as workers or visitors, for at least 7 days after their positive result
- avoid large gatherings and indoor crowded places for at least 7 days
- inform Public Health of your positive result if they tested positive on a rapid antigen test (RAT)
- let their workplace 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 and on public transport if they must leave home.

- **If people test positive to COVID-19 but still have symptoms** they should stay at home or away from others until their symptoms have resolved completely or have significantly improved. There are other respiratory viruses, including influenza viruses, that can cause serious illness in some people, and spread easily from person to person.
- If some mild symptoms remain, Public Health recommends they wear a face mask in indoor settings and on public transport.

If anyone with COVID-19 is concerned or unsure if their symptoms are improving, they should seek medical advice.

Close contacts of people who test positive to COVID-19 should:

- let their workplace know they are a close contact - workplaces may have policies in place for the return to work of cases and close contacts of COVID-19
- test for COVID-19 if they have any symptoms
- wear a facemask when indoors or on public transport for 7 days after their last contact with someone who has COVID-19
- avoid visiting high risk facilities such as hospitals, residential aged care and disability facilities, and anyone at high risk of severe disease for 7 days

## Best practice planning

- Review your COVID-19 safety plan and workplace health and safety policy and procedures; ensure they cover management of COVID-19 cases and close contacts, in workers and residents/clients.
- Plan how resident cases and close contacts will be managed safely. Maintain your case and outbreak management plan; consider including influenza and other acute respiratory infections in its scope. See the Case and Outbreak Management Framework for Tasmanian Settings and related tools.
- Have policies and processes in place to identify, test and manage workers and residents/clients with acute respiratory or other COVID-19 symptoms.

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](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au). If any information in this factsheet is inconsistent with information on that website, please use the information online.

## Best practice COVID-19 control measures

- Recommend workers and residents/clients to be up to date with vaccination against COVID-19 and influenza. See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Vaccination*.
- Consider Screening workers and residents/clients for:
  - > recent (within the past five days) positive COVID-19 test results
  - > acute respiratory and other COVID-19 symptoms
  - > COVID-19 close contacts.
- Maintain a supply of RATs for workers and residents/clients.
- Test early to support a rapid response and minimise the spread of illness.
- Require use of facemasks by workers and residents/clients (in communal areas) when COVID-19 and/or influenza are highly prevalent in the community.
- Encourage use of facemasks by workers at other times. See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Facemasks*.
- Have information about the setting (size, layout, worker and resident numbers) ready to provide to Public Health to support outbreak risk assessment and mitigation, if requested.
- Ensure good ventilation. See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Ventilation*.
  - > Open doors and windows as safe, appropriate and practicable.
  - > Arrange regular maintenance of air conditioners and heaters, as appropriate.
  - > Encourage clients to spend time outdoors, where feasible.
- Continue to display COVID-19 safety signage.
- Continue to encourage physical distancing. See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Physical Distancing*.
- Continue to encourage and help people to maintain hand and respiratory hygiene and effective cleaning, with a focus on frequently touched surfaces. See *Best Practice for Workplaces: Hygiene and Cleaning*.

## Case management

- For clients/residents who test positive who test positive,
  - > - maintain their privacy
  - > - support them to report positive RAT results to Public Health
  - > - support them to complete the case survey they receive from Public Health.
- Plan how resident cases will be managed safely (cohorting if necessary). People with COVID-19 can reside together; and people with influenza can reside together. However, where possible,
  - > people who have not tested positive to COVID-19 should not reside with people who have tested positive to COVID-19
  - > people who have not tested positive to influenza should not reside with people who have tested positive to influenza.
- Isolate cases away from other people, preferably in a single room with a door that can be closed.
- Inform relevant workers and designate specific workers to support the person with COVID-19 (or influenza).
- If the case is a resident, consider covid@homeplus support.
- Minimise the number of people who spend time in the same room as a case/s. Ensure those who do are safe.
- Identify close contacts in the setting. Support them to follow the latest requirements and instructions provided by Public Health (Tasmania) for close contacts, including to be alert for signs of COVID-19 and to get tested.

For the latest definition of close contact, go to [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au)

## Further information

- [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au)
- Public Health
  - > email: [public.health@health.tas.gov.au](mailto:public.health@health.tas.gov.au)
  - > phone: 1800 671 738

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