

9 May 2020

Today's newsletter covers information for providers on COVID-19 outbreak management, a list of aged care state and territory emergency contacts for use outside normal business hours and a link to the ACQSC aged care quality bulletin.

Details for veterans and their widow/ers from DVA on the availability of personal Monitoring Technology are also included in this newsletter.

As always, many thanks to you and your teams for your continued support to protect older Australians.

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What's New

Information for Providers on COVID-19 Outbreak Management

We would like to remind providers of the resources that are currently available to assist with COVID-19 outbreak management.

The following information provides a summary of the CDNA's guidance on COVID-19 case and outbreak management, as well as information discussed at today's webinar on *Residential Aged Care COVID-19 Outbreak Preparedness and Management*.

- **When an Outbreak is Suspected:** If an outbreak is suspected, providers must immediately notify their local Public Health Unit, and the Australian Government Department of Health. The PHU manages the outbreak, for example testing, contact tracing and infection control. The Department of Health will work with the provider to support them to identify whether an outbreak has occurred, and deliver additional support if required, such as in-reach pathology testing, access to PPE and workforce assistance.
- **Workforce Management:** A critical aspect in the preparation phase is understanding the workforce impact and needs. It is essential that aged care providers put in place strategies to identify where and how they will get additional staff if there is an outbreak. Aged care providers must exhaust all possible avenues including contacting other providers for support; contacting recruitment agencies; reaching out to local and private district hospitals. The workforce surge measures that are in place are a last resort and work to complement the workforce that providers have sourced. They are not the full solution for a provider.
- **When an Outbreak is Confirmed:** When an outbreak is confirmed, providers must establish an outbreak management team to direct, monitor and oversee the outbreak, confirm roles and responsibilities and liaise with their relevant Australian Government Department of Health state/territory officer.

Providers will also need to put in place additional infection prevention and control measures, including:

- Isolation or cohorting of affected residents
 - Maintaining hand hygiene
 - Wearing appropriate PPE
 - Practising cough and sneeze etiquette
 - Enhanced environmental cleaning
 - Placing signage at entrances and other locations in the facility
 - Screening of staff and visitors.
- Providers must continue to support safe, quality care for aged care consumers during visitor restrictions. More information can be found on this [here](#).
 - Providers are expected to exercise care and compassion, keeping residents at the centre of decision-making.
 - This includes the need to:
 - Communicate with residents and families in an ongoing way
 - Put in place supplementary and alternative arrangements to support families, friends and others to maintain regular contact with residents
 - Ensure that residents continue to receive safe, quality care during the visitor restrictions.

Further information can be found in the [national guidelines for the prevention, control and public health management of COVID-19 outbreaks in residential care facilities](#) developed by the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA).

Please also refer to the [fact sheet on outbreak management in residential aged care facilities](#).

Aged Care State and Territory Emergency Contacts

Inform the Federal Department of Health of any confirmed COVID-19 cases via agedcareCOVIDcases@health.gov.au – this will facilitate Australian Government support for PPE and staff supplementation.

The Department can help with information on resources to manage an emergency or service delivery issues. If you need urgent assistance outside of normal business hours please contact the department in the relevant state on:

Victoria / Tasmania - 1800 078 709

New South Wales / Australian Capital Territory - 1800 852 649

South Australia - 1800 288 475

Queensland - 1800 300 125

Western Australia - 1800 733 923

Northern Territory - 1800 355 348

This information is also available on the [department's website](#).

ACQSC Aged Care Quality Bulletin

The ACQSC's Aged Care Quality Bulletin for May has been released and provides details on an online survey for aged care providers of home services. It also includes details about the suspension of residential site audits and home services quality audits, as well as information regarding flu vaccinations for staff and residents of aged care facilities, nutrition during COVID-19, and grants for digital devices.

The Commissioner's message published in the bulletin reads:

While the current trends in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic are broadly reassuring across Australia, there are still very serious risks for older Australians, which means we must not relax our current vigilance.

The Commission is continuing to adapt its regulatory response to keep consumers safe and to provide guidance and support to providers in delivering safe, effective, compassionate and high-quality care.

This is particularly true when it comes to the current restrictions relating to visitors to aged care facilities. Our Chief Clinical Advisor recently wrote to providers of residential aged care services recommending the [screening of all staff and visitors on entry to the facility](#). We also issued [further advice on actions and strategies that providers can take when it comes to visitor restrictions](#). As always, the advice centres on the ongoing safety and wellbeing of consumers.

To read the Commissioner's full message and details on all bulletin items, visit the [Commission's website](#).

Veterans Can Access Personal Monitoring Technology Through DVA

The Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) has a range of personal monitoring technologies available to eligible veterans and widow/ers.

Accessing and installing a personal monitoring system may be suitable for older veterans and widow/ers if they are self-isolating to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19.

DVA veterans and widow/ers can access fully-monitored 24-hours a day, seven days a week personal response systems in their home or as mobile pendant personal response devices that are designed to keep them safe at home and when out and about. The initial and ongoing costs are covered by DVA if these devices are arranged through DVA.

Personal response devices can be tailored to an individual's needs, giving the person being monitored the comfort that assistance is never far away and reassuring family and friends that their loved one is able to access help easily, if it is needed.

Technology has greatly improved these devices. Some have additional features like built-in fall detector capabilities and GPS tracking that works where there is a mobile signal.

When a device is activated, these systems are supported by an emergency response centre, with someone who will talk directly with the person, if they can.

As the emergency response centre is given the person's location they can arrange for the appropriate emergency service to attend. The emergency response centre can also notify a user's nominated family or friends to inform them of the situation.

Personal response systems can be prescribed by an occupational therapist, physiotherapist or a registered nurse following an in-home fall and cognitive assessment. The prescribing health provider will organise the supply and installation through a DVA-contracted supplier and will provide all training in the use of the device and equipment. For more information go to the [DVA website](#) or call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 376).

Resources

- [ACQSC's Bulletin](#)
- [CDNA national guidelines for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities in Australia](#)

Coming Soon

- More information on accessing the COVID-19 Aged Care Support Grant
- Additional translated resources for providers

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