

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

Factsheet | Version 2.0 | 20 July 2022

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 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.

COVID-19 requirements

Under the *Public Health Act 1997*:

- people who test positive to COVID-19 must:
 - isolate for at least seven days from the date of the positive test result; this includes people staying or living in homeless and specialty housing services
 - inform Public Health of their positive result if they used a rapid antigen test (RAT)
 - not visit residential aged care facilities for at least seven days after their positive result
- close contacts of people who test positive to COVID-19 must:
 - inform their employer that they are a close contact
 - test for COVID-19 every day they leave their home, for seven days from becoming a close contact
 - wear a facemask (unless exempt) in indoor settings outside the home
 - isolate and test immediately if they have any symptoms.

People with symptoms

Public Health strongly recommends anyone with acute (or new) respiratory symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat and/or runny nose, to stay at home (away from other people), even if those symptoms are mild,

and get tested for COVID-19. Testing can be by PCR laboratory test or RAT.

If the result is negative and the person still has acute symptoms, they should stay away from other people and repeat the test in the next 24-48 hours.

If the result is negative the second time and they still have acute symptoms, they should stay away from other people until the symptoms resolve completely or there is significant improvement. There are other respiratory viruses, including influenza viruses, that can cause serious illness in some people, and spread easily from person to person.

Anyone with a fever, who feels unwell or has any increase in symptoms should stay away from other people even if they test negative for COVID-19.

If symptoms have resolved or mostly gone, individuals can return to work or normal duties. If some mild symptoms remain, Public Health recommends they wear a facemask when away from home. If the person has any concerns, or is unsure if their symptoms are improving, Public Health recommends they seek medical advice.

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.

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*.

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.

- Screen workers and residents/clients for:
 - recent (within the past seven 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,
 - 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 (isolation; and 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).
- 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

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.