

COVID-19 Fact Sheet Information for Residential Aged Care Facilities

Emergency Management (Residential Aged Care Facilities No 7) (COVID-19) Direction 2020

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 within South Australia, the State Coordinator has issued a Direction under the *Emergency Management Act 2004* to limit entry into residential aged care facilities (RACF) in South Australia.

The *Emergency Management (Residential Aged Care Facilities No 6) (COVID-19) Direction 2020* has now been revoked and replaced by the *Emergency Management (Residential Aged Care Facilities No 7) (COVID-19) Direction 2020*.

All providers of residential aged care and members of the public are urged to read the full [Direction](#).

Do I have to follow the direction contained within the *Emergency Management (Residential Aged Care Facilities No 7) (COVID-19) Direction 2020*?

Yes, the operator of a RACF in South Australia must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a person who is prohibited under the direction does not enter or remain on the premises.

It is an offence to breach this Direction and fines may be issued for non-compliance.

When does the new Direction commence operation?

The new Direction comes into effect on 14 August 2020 at 00:01hrs, however, operators have until 27 August 2020 to implement some of the provisions.

Workforce

From 27 August 2020, operators of RACF need to implement a number of changes to the way that employees and contractors at their facilities work.

Restrictions on working across multiple RACF

From 27 August 2020, all personal care workers are only permitted to work at one RACF.

If a personal care worker intends to work at a different RACF, there must be 14 days between work shifts at the first and second RACF.

At present, these restrictions do not apply to other employees or contractors.

PPE requirements

A person who provides nursing, medical, allied health or personal care services to residents must wear appropriate PPE, in accordance with Australian Guidelines, whenever a distance of 1.5m between themselves and the resident cannot be maintained.

SA Health has surplus PPE available to RACF, if you are unable to source from your usual provider. Please email: HealthPSCMSCOCustomerService@sa.gov.au to obtain additional stock of PPE.

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Information for Residential Aged Care Facilities

Training requirements

All employees or contractors who provide personal care or nursing care to residents must complete COVID-19 infection control training of a kind, frequency and by a date determined by the Department for Health and Wellbeing.

- > The operator of the RACF must keep records completion of this training.
- > These records must be provided to an authorised officer upon request.

Please visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare for details.

Workforce Management Plans

By 27 August 2020, all RACF must have in place a Workforce Management Plan that requires:

- > All employees, contractors and volunteers to provide details of any additional places of employment they may have.
- > All employees, contractors and volunteers to notify the RACF if they become aware of a case of COVID-19 being identified at any of their other places of employment.

The operator of the RACF must keep records of these notifications and provide this information to an authorised officer upon request.

Note – These measures are being implemented to assist with contact tracing if an identified case of COVID-19 is confirmed.

COVID-19 Infection Control Plans

By 27 August 2020, all RACF must submit a COVID-19 Infection Control Plan for all communal areas at the facility to the Department for Health and Wellbeing for approval.

- > The COVID-19 Infection Control Plan must be submitted to the Department for Health and Wellbeing.
- > The RACF may continue to operate while they are waiting for their plan to be approved by the Department.
- > Approved COVID-19 Infection Control Plans must be kept available for inspection by authorised officers and any persons entering the RACF. It may also be published by the Department for Health and Wellbeing.

Please visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare for details.

Visitor restrictions

Who is prohibited from visiting a RACF?

The following people are not permitted to enter or remain on the premises of a RACF in South Australia (this includes employees or contractors):

- > A person who has entered South Australia from any place other than directly from the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania or Queensland in the last 14 days.
- > A person who has been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days (except in circumstances where adequate PPE was worn).
- > A person with a fever (>38), or who has a history of fever or chills in the preceding 72 hours, or symptoms of acute respiratory infection or loss of taste and smell.
- > A person who has undertaken a COVID-19 test and is awaiting a test result.
- > A person who has not been vaccinated against 2020 seasonal influenza, unless that person has a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine or is an infant aged less than 6 months.

Note – The above are referred to throughout the rest of this document as “prohibited categories”.

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Information for Residential Aged Care Facilities

Visits by family and friends?

Are family and friends still able to visit their loved one in a RACF?

Under the Direction, visits for the purpose of providing care and support to a resident are permitted. This includes a visit by a family member or friend of the resident, including children, for the purposes of providing social support to the resident.

The following guidelines should be followed in relation to care and support visits:

- > In general, each resident is permitted to receive one care and support visit per day of up to two people.
- > However, the operator of a RACF may approve additional care and support visits for a resident, if appropriate or required under the circumstances.
- > Visits should be conducted in a resident's room, outdoors, or in a specific area designated by the RACF, rather than communal areas.
- > Physical distancing of 1.5m should be adhered to wherever possible.

Compassionate visits

- > Aged care providers are asked to take particular care to balance the need to protect residents, staff and others from the risk of transmission of COVID-19, while supporting the rights and wellbeing of residents and their families.
- > Compassionate visits should be given to people in palliative care and those nearing end of life. Under the Direction, 'end of life' is defined as a person for whom death is imminent (likely within 2 weeks). Visits for the purpose of providing end of life support to a resident are permitted and numbers of visitors are not restricted in these circumstances.
- > Relatives and friends who travel from Victoria, NSW or ACT to provide end of life support to a resident are permitted to visit a RACF within 14 days of entering South Australia, provided:
 - o They wear appropriate PPE at all times when on the premises of the RACF; and
 - o The self-quarantine at all other times.
- > **All interstate travellers must complete a cross border pre-approval form at least 14 days prior to arrival into South Australia.** This form is available online at: <https://www.police.sa.gov.au/online-services/cross-border-travel-application>.
- > Visitors who are providing end of life support to a resident are permitted to visit if they have not yet received their flu vaccination, but must take all reasonable steps to get vaccinated as soon as practicable after their initial visit.

Will residents still receive health, medical and pharmaceutical services?

Yes. Health, medical and pharmaceutical services must still be provided to residents, and people providing those services are allowed to visit (provided they do not fall into any of the prohibited categories).

Can contractors, along with goods and services providers undertake work at an aged care facility?

Yes (provided they do not fall into any of the prohibited categories). Contractors and persons providing goods and services that are necessary for the effective operation of the RACF are permitted to enter and remain on site. People providing professional services at the facility, such as hairdressers and advocates, are also permitted to visit.

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Information for Residential Aged Care Facilities

Who else can visit a RACF?

Providing they do not fall into any of the prohibited categories, the following people are also permitted to visit:

- > Legal practitioners can attend to take instructions for a client who is a resident of the facility, or for the purpose of the execution of a will or other testamentary instrument by a client who is a resident of the facility.
- > Emergency management or law enforcement personnel, such as police, ambulance and fire services. In the event of an emergency, emergency service personnel may enter the facility regardless of any of the criteria listed in clause 5 of the Direction.
- > Officials undertaking regulatory functions, such as the Regulatory Officers from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.
- > A person conducting a prospective resident visit with one support person.

Can volunteers visit a RACF?

Providing that they do not fall into any of the prohibited categories, volunteers who are providing care and support to a resident (such as community visitors) may visit a RACF if:

- > it is the only care and support visit made to the resident on that day; or
- > it is an additional care and support visit that has been approved by the operator of the RACF.

Volunteers may also enter and remain on the premises of a RACF if they are providing services that are necessary for the effective operation of the facility.

Volunteers must:

- > notify the RACF of any other places that they are employed or volunteer; and
- > notify the RACF if they become aware of a COVID-19 case identified at their additional place of employment/volunteering.

Residents

Can a resident leave and re-enter a RACF?

Yes, residents are permitted to leave a RACF and then return, regardless of their reason for leaving.

All residents re-entering a RACF should undertake a [screening checklist](#) for COVID-19 upon their return. If they indicate 'yes' to any identified risk factors, appropriate strategies should be put in place to mitigate any risks to other residents.

Can a RACF still accept new residents?

Yes. Nothing in the Direction precludes a RACF from accommodating new residents, whether on a permanent basis or for respite care.

- > All new residents should undertake a [screening checklist](#) for COVID-19 prior to admission.
- > There is no requirement for new or returning residents who are screened as low risk to self-isolate for any period following admission.

Can prospective residents visit the facility they are considering moving into?

Yes, providing they do not fall into any of the prohibited categories. A maximum of two people can visit a facility for no more than two hours duration to consider whether a person, holding a valid ACAT approval for residential aged care, shall become a resident.

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Information for Residential Aged Care Facilities

Do I have to test new or returning residents for COVID-19?

No. The current public health advice is that pre-testing of an asymptomatic person to enter a RACF is not required. However, all new and returning residents should undertake a [screening checklist](#) for COVID-19 prior to admission.

There is no requirement for new or returning residents who are screened as low risk to self-isolate for any period following admission.

How can I ensure compliance with the Direction if a RACF is co-located with another facility, for example an acute facility or retirement village?

A separate fact sheet has been prepared to provide advice on compliance with the Direction on co-located sites. For more information, visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare.

How do I apply for an exemption in exceptional circumstances?

All requests for exemptions relating to exceptional circumstances must be made in writing to the Department for Health and Wellbeing via officeforageingwell@sa.gov.au.

- > Include contact details and any information relevant to the request, including the urgency of the situation.
- > Requests will be assessed by a prescribed authorised officer as soon as practicable and the requestor will be advised of the outcome.

Influenza vaccinations

Under the Direction, from 1 May 2020, **all staff and visitors** to a RACF must be vaccinated against 2020 seasonal influenza.

Does everyone entering a RACF need to be vaccinated?

Yes. This applies to staff, visitors, health practitioners, volunteers and others (for example, cleaners, tradesman, gardeners, hairdressers, maintenance staff).

The only exemptions to this requirement are:

- > A person who has a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine (such as person who has a history of anaphylaxis or has had Guillain-Barré Syndrome following vaccination, or who is taking check point inhibitor medication for cancer treatment).
 - o The visitor must provide appropriate evidence to the RACF they wish to visit, for example, a letter from a medical practitioner stating that they have a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine.
- > Infants aged 6 months or less.
- > In the event of an emergency, emergency services personnel are permitted to enter a RACF regardless of immunisation status.
- > Visitors who have been called in to provide end of life support to a resident who have not yet received their flu vaccination, however, they must take all reasonable steps to get vaccinated as soon as practicable after their initial visit.
- > If an employee or contractor of a RACF is not able to access an adequate supply of the influenza vaccine, they may enter the premises provided that the operator of the RACF:
 - o Notifies the Department for Health and Wellbeing via officeforageingwell@sa.gov.au as soon as practicable.
 - o Takes all reasonable steps to access an adequate supply as soon as practicable.

Note – Due to the vulnerability of this population group, no requests for exemption for other reasons will be considered in relation to flu vaccination.

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Information for Residential Aged Care Facilities

What happens if staff do not wish to be vaccinated due to cultural, religious or other reasons?

Residential aged care providers will need to take all reasonable steps to ensure staff who have not had the 2020 seasonal influenza vaccination, and do not have a medical contraindication to the vaccine, do not enter or remain on the premises.

Do residential aged care providers still need to provide free influenza vaccinations to staff and volunteers?

Yes. Under the Aged Care Quality Standards, residential aged care providers must offer free flu vaccinations every year to staff and volunteers, and keep records of their vaccinations.

How will aged care providers know whether visitors have been vaccinated?

Aged care providers should seek appropriate evidence of immunisation status from individuals seeking to enter the facility.

- > Appropriate evidence may include a statement or record from a health practitioner, or an immunisation history statement available from Medicare online or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app.
- > Providers may also consider maintaining records to support effective administration and to substantiate their compliance with this requirement.

What if a visitor attends the premises of a RACF but remains outside and undertakes a visit with a resident through a closed window?

An exemption has been granted to allow unvaccinated persons to enter and remain on the premises of a RACF for the purposes of visiting a resident in the following circumstances:

- > The visitor must remain on the outdoor side of the closed window, with the resident to remain indoors.
- > Physical distancing must be maintained at all times and there must be no contact with other visitors or staff on the premises.

Will residents still have the right to refuse vaccination?

While vaccination for all residents is important to protect themselves and others against influenza, residents have the right to refuse vaccinations.

For more information

Office for Ageing Well
Department for Health and Wellbeing
SA Health, Government of South Australia
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019



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