INFECTION CONTROL GUIDANCE ON PREPARING FOR AND RESPONDING TO COVID-19 IN YOUR BUSINESS

The Australian Government is currently enacting a range of infection prevention and control measures across the country in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. While it's not a time to panic, it's an important time to make sure your business continues to have best practice preparations and response plans in place to maintain the safety of your clients and staff.

Infection Control Practices
Making sure you have effective Infection Control practices in place is an important part of minimising the risk of the spread of infectious diseases and maintaining the safety of clients and staff.

Remind staff of the importance of standard precautions
Remind staff of the importance of continuing standard precautions to protect against infectious diseases including:
- maintaining correct hand-wash hygiene;
- covering coughs and sneezes and immediately disposing of tissues; and
- wearing disposable latex gloves when handling food or any item which may be contaminated by bodily fluids.

In the event of an outbreak transmission based precautions must be used with standard precautions.

Staff also need to stay away from the workplace if they have any infectious disease, including the flu, until they are cleared by a doctor. **A workplace includes any private residence where a staff member is performing duties for a client, even if they are only cleaning or domestic duties.**

We strongly recommend reading the [Information for Health Care and Residential Workers](#) and [Information for Employers](#) that has been released by the Australian Government Department of Health for further guidance.

Support your clients to take precautions
Infection control isn't one-way, and your clients should be empowered and supported to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves, staff and other clients as well. Providing information and instruction about good hygiene practices as you would for your staff can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

You should also request that clients report to you if they suspect they may be infectious so that your staff can respond accordingly.

Restrictions on Visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities
Residents of residential aged care facilities are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection and are more vulnerable to serious complications if they do become ill. As such the Federal Government has put [visitation restrictions in place for aged care facilities](#).

Residential aged care facilities have been advised to have appropriate precautions in place to ensure residents continue to remain safe from COVID-19. These precautions

include monitoring, assessment, testing and having space and resources prepared in the event a resident needs to be isolated.

For aged care workers, these rules also apply:
- from 1 May, you must have your influenza vaccination to work in or visit an aged care facility; and
- if you're a residential aged care worker, you must not go to work if you have a fever or symptoms of a respiratory illness.

More information is available on the Australian Government Department of Health's webpage [Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advice for the Health and Aged Care Sector](#).

Considerations for NDIS SIL/SDA Homes = disability providers supporting participants in Supported Independent Living (SIL) and/or Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) are encouraged to follow advice provided to residential aged care providers. All advice/recommendations are to be assessed against your specific circumstances noting numbers within single SIL home environments are considerably smaller than in residential aged care.

Business Continuity Plans
If you haven't already done so, now is a good time to review your Business Continuity Plan.

A well-considered Business Continuity Plan means you'll have a practical plan for how your business can prepare for, and continue to operate during the pandemic, such as in the event that a number of your staff or clients become infected.

It helps you to:
- identify and prevent risks where possible;
- prepare for risks that you can't control; and
- respond and recover if an incident or crisis occurs.

Check that your Business Continuity Plan includes a:
- risk management plan;
- business impact analysis;
- incident response plan, with plan activation, incident response team, communications and key contact details; and
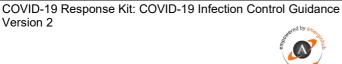- recovery plan.

We strongly recommend that you schedule time for a desktop exercise (or drill) of your plan, so that staff are familiar with response requirements and can make suggestions for any improvements.

Infection Control Policy and Procedure
You must have an Infection Control Policy and Procedure to ensure the risk of the spread of infectious diseases in the workplace is minimised.

Your Infection Control Policy and Procedure needs to outline your:
- standard precautions;

- person-centred approach to infection control – this includes putting clients at the centre of infection prevention and control and empowering them to participate in the process; and
- reporting procedure for incidents relating to infection control or infectious diseases.

Your policies and procedures should be endorsed by your business' governing body, who should also regularly review them, taking into account feedback from staff and clients.

More Information

For more information about COVID-19 infection control, see the Australian Government Department of Health's [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#) fact sheet.