

AC04: Pandemic Response Procedure

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Legislative and Policy References

This procedure is an addendum to the general Infection Control Policy and should be read and applied in conjunction with that policy.

Legislation, regulations and standards relevant to this policy and procedure include:

- Aged Care Act 1997 (Cwth)
- Aged Care Standards, specifically **Standard 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8**
- Charter of Aged Care Rights
- Commonwealth Home Support Programme Guidelines
- Disability Services Act 1993
- Disability Standards
- Home Care Packages Program Guide 2020
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguarding Framework
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (Commonwealth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cwth)
- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011

Organisational References:

- COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan 2019
- HR04 Workplace Health and Safety Policy
- AC03 Infection Control Policy
- HR02 Staff Training and Development Policy
- GOV07 Privacy Policy

RELATED LINKS AND REFERENCES

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Alerts 2020 <https://www.health.gov.au/>
- Infectious Diseases www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Infectious_Diseases
- Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza
<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-ahmppi.htm>
- Staff Training Register
- Incident form/Register

Position Statement

Belyuen Community Government Council (the Council) and the Imabulk Aged Care Service (Aged Care Program) recognises that from time to time diseases can escalate to a point where they become an

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epidemic or pandemic and place the community at higher risk of infection. During these times there is an additional risk when delivering care services, both to the consumer and the care worker due to close and often personal contact, leading to the possibility either of contracting or passing on an infectious or communicable disease.

The Council recognises an obligation to provide a safe working environment for both consumers and staff involved in the Aged Care Program and aim, as far as possible, to reduce the risk and protect consumers, staff and volunteers, along with the wider community from infection as a result of an epidemic or pandemic.

Additionally, the Council will comply with all directives issued by Health and Government authorities to slow the progression of the outbreak and minimise the impact on individuals and the health system.

Where a consumer or staff member is suspected of having, or is known to have an identified communicable disease, the Council will work with the individual and the health authorities to minimise the risk to others.

In the instance of a pandemic being declared, Management may be required to report to authorities where a staff member who has been advised to self-isolate or go into quarantine, has not adhered to this advice and their actions place the general public and vulnerable consumers at risk.

In accordance with the Council's Privacy Policy, and outside of statutory disclosure requirements, the Council maintains strict confidentiality on the status of staff and consumers in relation to communicable infections.

The Council will provide all direct care staff with education relating to communicable disease including ways to minimise infection to themselves and the consumers they support.

This policy specifically refers to an infectious disease that has been declared a pandemic (*a global outbreak of a disease*) caused by a pathogen or micro-organism such as viruses, bacteria, parasites or fungi. It also has application in the instance of an epidemic (a more localised outbreak and spread of a disease).

Responsibilities

Chief Executive Officer

- Uphold and implement any directives or recommendations advised by Government or Health Authorities.
- Develop an Epidemic Management / Action Plan for the organisation.
- Minimise the impact on the day to day service delivery to consumers of the service, including the maintenance of essential care and support to consumers.
- Identify non-essential activities that can be suspended to reduce the potential for vulnerable consumers and staff to become infected.
- Ensure that all staff have access to adequate and reliable training on the identified infectious disease to minimise confusion and unwarranted concern in the workplace.
- Provide clear communication to the workforce, contractors and consumers relating to the identified issue, the organisation's response and any advice received from Government or Health Authorities.

- Ensure that staff are aware of and have access to relevant infection control policies including any updates relating to identified risk.
- Contractors and suppliers should also be advised of any changes to requirements such as access, delivery processes, expected hygiene practices and additional protocols.
- Encourage and support staff immunisation against the identified disease if and where available.
- Provide staff, volunteers and Ironbark participants with training, support and resources to minimise the risks of infection outbreaks, including the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) to minimise the chances of cross infection between consumers and staff.
- Provide support and advice to staff, volunteers and or Ironbark participants who contract the identified disease in the course of their work/ duties.

Manager/Coordinator/Supervisor

- Support implementation of the Emergency Management Plans including any pandemic specific plans.
- Manage service delivery in a way that minimises exposure to the infectious disease for vulnerable consumers, staff, volunteers and the community.
- Ensure all staff are aware of and follow infection control processes relating to the specific infectious disease including handwashing, social distancing and other hygiene practices.
- Remind direct care staff of Standard and additional precautions and provide refresher training where required.
- Ensure adequate stocks of identified PPE (gloves, soap, hand sanitiser, masks, gowns) are maintained at all times and provide training on the correct use of PPE where required.
- Inform the CEO of any incidence of the identified infectious disease amongst staff, volunteers and or Ironbark participants or consumers.

Support Worker

- Follow directions from management designed to protect vulnerable consumers, staff, volunteers and the community at large.
- Follow infection control procedures and use standard (and additional) precautions at all times as directed.
- Seek medical advice promptly where they suspect they have been exposed to the infectious disease or they showing symptoms of the disease.
- Inform their supervisor if they have contracted, or suspect they have contracted, the identified infectious disease.
- Maintain personal health and hygiene standards.
- Practice social distancing where possible.
- Maintain confidentiality of consumers and colleague's personal information where they gain knowledge of the person contracting an infectious disease.

Volunteers / Ironbark Participants

- Regular volunteer duties will continue as usual across the service unless volunteers /participants are not well, or not comfortable performing regular duties during the period of the outbreak.
- Volunteers and or Ironbark participants should direct any queries to their supervisor and should follow all standard and / or additional pre-cautions as directed.

Procedures

This procedure is to be read in conjunction with the Council's Infection Control Policy.

Pandemic Outbreak Precautions

Where a pandemic outbreak alert is issued by the World Health Organisation and the Federal Government of Australia the Council will follow prescribed responses:

Standard Precautions Relating to an Epidemic or Pandemic

While epidemics and pandemic outbreaks can differ due to the various causative agents it is expected that standard precautions will always form part of the first defense and therefore staff are directed to uphold standard precautions at all times.

All care staff/support workers should use standard precautions when delivering care to consumers or their carers. Standard precautions means treating everything and everyone as potentially infectious and, therefore, using infection control practices in daily work practice.

All staff will practice standard precautions when providing care to consumers, and additional precautions as directed.

- Standard Precautions include the following:
- Hand washing
- Correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Correct handling and disposal of waste (e.g. paper tissues)
- Appropriate cleaning of all equipment used in providing consumer care
- Maintaining a clean work environment
- Maintenance of personal hygiene practices

Additional Precautions

Additional precautions that relate to the identified infectious outbreak may include:

- Utilising additional PPE where indicated
- Social distancing e.g. maintaining a distance of 1.5m (or other distance as prescribed) between people where possible
- Avoiding infection hotspots

Work Environment and Cleaning Practices

- Maintaining the Aged Care Centre work environment in a clean and tidy manner is essential to infection control processes.
- Adequate handwashing areas, soap and hand sanitiser will be made available to all staff and visitors to the centre and visitors to the centre will be reminded to use these via posters and staff prompting.
- All surfaces such as workbenches and tables to be cleaned and sanitised at the end of each day and regularly throughout the day.
- All hard surfaces that are handled often including as taps, door handles and phones should be regularly cleaned and sanitised.

- Furniture such as chairs should be wiped down and sanitised at the end of each day and regularly throughout the day where possible.
- Rubbish bins will have a bin liner that is changed regularly (at least daily) and either be open or have a foot operated pedal designed to lift the cover to minimise people touching the lid.
- Toilet lids should be closed prior to flushing contents to minimise droplet contamination.

Where a shared vehicle is used the staff member should wipe over areas of the car that they will touch before and after using.

When working in the home of consumers:

- Only take into the home essential equipment that will be used for the assigned duties to minimise cross infection.
- Where cleaning equipment is taken into the home it must be thoroughly disinfected after use and BEFORE placing it in the vehicle using disinfectant wipes, or other appropriate and/or specified products e.g. cleaning spray and paper towel/ designated cleaning cloths.
- Clean and sanitise hands before and after the visit to the home.
- Wear disposable gloves and change these between consumers and more often where necessary.

Health and Hygiene Standards

All workers are to:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean hands with soap or alcohol-based (minimum 60% Alcohol) hand sanitiser for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching their face, especially the eyes, mouth and nose.
- Avoid non-essential contact with others such as shaking hands.
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with a tissue and disposing of the tissue immediately. Sneezing or coughing into the elbow is encouraged.
- Change out of work clothes at the end of the shift or day's work and launder clothes/uniform between shifts.
- Meals and breaks are encouraged to be eaten in staggered timeframes and/or in smaller groups with social distancing provisions actioned. Staff should refrain from sharing food and any utensils. The cleaning of personal dishes / cutlery etc in a common area such as a staff room kitchen should be done following appropriate hygiene practices and items such as tea towels should be laundered daily.

If staff are ill or showing symptoms of infection or someone close to them (in the same household) is showing symptoms or has been diagnosed with an infection, staff should remain at home and notify the office and advise their supervisor.

- Immunisation against influenza is strongly advised.

Pre-Home Visit Safety Check

Prior to entering into a consumer's home staff should ensure their own safety by asking specific questions relating to the infectious outbreak:

e.g. *"Is there anyone in the home who is sick with a cold or has flu like symptoms?"*

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- Where the response is positive the staff member should refrain from entering the home and alert their supervisor.
- The consumer should be advised that the staff member is unable to assist the person that day and that they should alert their GP or Health Clinic of their illness and follow guidance as given by their health practitioner.

Modification to Services

Where required individual services may be amended for consumers where there are urgent needs that are unable to be met by the person or their family carer, e.g. additional shopping services to minimise the risk of infection or where the consumer is in quarantine.

Wellbeing phone calls may be instigated if staff are unable to visit vulnerable consumers on a regular basis.

Note: all costs for consumer goods remains the responsibility of the consumer, the organisation is unable to use grant or package funds to pay for these.

Activities

All non-essential activities that bring groups of vulnerable people together will be suspended until the risk of infection is reduced this includes:

- Large group activities such as morning teas, social meet ups and exercise programs.
- Bus outings and excursions.

Small group activities may be considered where consumers will not be placed at risk as this also helps to reduce social isolation and maintain wellbeing. Keeping safe distances from a high-risk infection demographic such as young children will also be considered in activity planning.

Standard precautions (*and where identified, additional pre-cautions*) must be adhered to and consumers supported to follow applicable hygiene practices, e.g. handwashing facilities are available and environment hygiene is maintained to an appropriate standard.

Suspected Infectious / Communicable Disease

Staff will follow standard procedures for infection control. Where the consumer has a known, or suspected, communicable disease they:

- Shall be attended to by support workers who have been immunised or are known to be immune from the suspected disease.
- Additional pre-cautions identified as necessary and relevant for the safety of staff and other consumers will be enacted.
- Will not be permitted to attend large gatherings of susceptible consumers organised by the service prior to receiving a medical clearance.

Staff who Contract an Infectious / Communicable Disease will:

- Seek advice from their GP or other relevant health professional regarding exclusion timeframes.
- Inform their Manager/Supervisor of the infection and the exclusion time.
- Refrain from attending work for the period of the recommended exclusion.

- Gain a medical clearance from their GP or other relevant health professional prior to returning to work.

Staff Leave Allowances

The Council recognises that staff may need to take time off to self-isolate due to infection, potential infection, are identified as 'at risk' if they become infected or are at risk of infecting others. To support staff through this period the Council will support staff to:

- Take any leave they currently have owing including sick leave, holidays, time in leu, long service leave and / or any other leave relevant to the relevant workplace agreement or industry standard.
- Where a staff member is able to continue their work remotely the organisation may, at its discretion, arrange for the staff member to be equipped and facilitated to complete their work off-site.
- The organisation will reimburse any reasonable costs incurred by direct care staff related to testing and medical clearance.

Conferences and Meetings

- Attendance at all face to face, non-essential business meetings and conferences will be suspended for the duration of the epidemic / pandemic.
- Where possible site visits by non-essential staff to areas/communities where there are vulnerable consumers will be restricted.

Cultural Practices

Community Elders, consumers and other relevant stakeholders will be consulted where cultural practices may impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals due to the infectious outbreak. Changes to practices and activities will be considered to protect both consumers and staff.

Review Triggers

This procedure is reviewed internally for applicability, continuing effect and consistency with related documents and other legislative provisions when any of the following occurs:

1. The related documents are amended.
2. The related documents are replaced by new documents.
3. Industry, legislation or service agreement changes may necessitate modifications to procedure
4. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council.

Notwithstanding the above, the organisation may review this procedure annually for relevance and to ensure that its effectiveness is maintained.

Revision History

Policy Version	Approval Date	Comments
1	15/03/2021	Original Version
	9/8/2021	Presented to council (res 8.1.8.21)