



Residential aged care: restrictions on entry, contractors and visitors

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Contents

Who should read this?	1
Can residents have visitors?	2
When are visits not allowed?	2
Can family be with someone to provide end of life support?	2
What if there is an outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19)?	2
What measures are in place to make visits as safe as possible?	3
Are there any other requirements for visiting?	3
What is the <i>National Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes During COVID-19</i> ?	3
How can providers facilitate visitor compliance with the Directions?	4
Who else can enter a residential aged care facility?	4
What measures should be put in place for those providing services in residential aged care?	4
Can building works continue at residential aged care services?	5
Can tradespeople and waste collectors attend residential aged care services?	5
What proof is required to comply with this part of the Direction?	6
How can I make a complaint?	6
Where can I get more information?	6

Who should read this?

This factsheet is for residential aged care providers, staff, visitors and contractors. This information aligns with State Directions and Commonwealth recommendations regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) for the aged care sector.

Older people are more likely to get very sick with coronavirus (COVID-19) and this means that, along with the physical distancing and infection control measures we are all required to adhere to, there are also additional ways to protect older Victorians.

The [Care Facilities Directions \(No 5\)](#), (the Directions) restrict visitor access across a range of aged care facilities. The Directions apply to all Australian Government (Commonwealth) funded residential aged care facilities and implement the position of the National Cabinet regarding entry of visitors.

Can residents have visitors?

Yes. Residents can have visitors who provide essential care and support, but it will be restricted.

Under the Directions, except for end of life care, a resident may only have two care and support visits a day for no longer than a total of two hours a day, with a maximum of two people visiting each day. Anyone under 16 years of age will not be able to visit, unless it is for end of life care and support.

These restrictions and conditions apply to all visitors. You can't visit if you have temperature higher than 37.5 degrees Celsius or flu-like symptoms (however mild), such as a sore throat, a cough, or shortness of breath.

Visitors should also have an up-to-date influenza vaccination. Information about influenza vaccination requirements can be found here: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>.

When are visits not allowed?

Residential aged care facilities will be undertaking screening of all visitors. No visitor can enter or remain on the premises of a facility in Victoria if they meet one or more of the following conditions:

- they have arrived in Australia from overseas in the last 14 days
- they have had known contact in the last 14 days with a person who is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- the person has a temperature higher than 37.5 degrees Celsius or symptoms of acute respiratory infection
- the person does not have this year's influenza vaccination, where a vaccination is available to the person
- the person has been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) and has not yet been given clearance from isolation (self-isolation).

These conditions apply to all visitors regardless of age, including essential staff and visiting service providers such as those providing care and support, and end of life support.

A person who ignores these conditions and restrictions will be liable for fines of up to \$20,000 or up to \$100,000 in the case of companies and other bodies corporate.

Can family be with someone to provide end of life support?

Yes. The Directions allow for family and loved ones to provide end of life support to a resident. Restrictions on the number and age of visitors do not apply when support is being provided to a dying resident but should be managed carefully.

What if there is an outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Should an outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) occur in the community surrounding the service, it may be appropriate to impose a total lockdown – preventing residents leaving the service and stopping all visits. If there is a coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak within the facility, it will be required to implement its 'COVID-19 management plan' which may also require the service to lock down all, or a section of, its facility.

Providers must weigh up the restrictions contained in the Directions against the existing obligations owed by aged care operators under the relevant Australian Government legislation, including:

- having regard to dignity of risk - the right to exercise choice and control in decision making about care, personal and social experiences and to exercise independence

- universal infection control - robust screening, cleaning and infection control measures and physical distancing continue to be key to slowing the spread of coronavirus and apply to all staff and visitors of residential aged care facilities.

What measures are in place to make visits as safe as possible?

[The COVID-19 Residential Aged Care Facilities Plan](#) provides information on how aged care services are working to keep residents, staff and visitors safe. This includes:

- Facilities undertaking temperature checking and health screening of all staff, visitors and attendees before entering the facility.
- Increased communication with residents, families and others about the visitor restrictions and provision of ongoing information to help them understand the restrictions and how they will affect their interactions.
- Scheduling visits to ensure there is a total limit on the number of visitors to the service at any one time and in accordance with the Directions.
- Visitors are restricted to certain areas.
- Cleaning and infection control measures required after each visit are put into place.
- Facilities making alternative arrangements to support families, friends and others to maintain regular contact with residents that do not require face-to-face visits, such as organising video conferencing calls, setting up a social communication internet page and reading out and sending emails on behalf of residents.

All of these measures are in place to allow visitors into the facility in accordance with the Directions and balance the health and safety of residents and staff, while supporting appropriate infection control.

Are there any other requirements for visiting?

Essential visitors must:

- visit only the resident
- wear personal protective equipment (PPE) as directed by staff. If PPE is required, visitors will need to wear the same type of PPE as staff. Staff must educate and help visitors to correctly put on and take off PPE.
- enter and leave the facility directly without spending time in communal areas
- perform hand hygiene before entering and after leaving the resident's room.

What is the *National Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes During COVID-19*?

Major providers have signed up to the *National Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes During COVID-19* which sets out principles, rights and responsibilities, and a complaints process. It also provides links to practical resources about innovative ways to facilitate compassionate visits, while complying with the Directions. For example:

- setting up a visitor's register or booking system to control the number of visitors to the facility
- only permitting visits which are pre-organised and at a mutually convenient time for the facility and the visitor
- having a visitors' room or other controlled space for visits in the facility, to permit visitors to be monitored
- regular communication with the family contact of residents to assist with increased anxiety over reduced visiting
- facilitating communication with residents through electronic means, in lieu of regular in person visits.

How can providers facilitate visitor compliance with the Directions?

Services can develop a *Visitors Code of Conduct* for all visitors to their facility, modelled on the National Code, which:

- is clearly communicated with visitors and incorporated into any visitor booking system
- is displayed at the entrance to the facility to ensure that visitors are aware of what is expected of them
- explains consequences for non-compliance, including an express statement that any non-compliance places the health and safety of residents, staff and the community at risk
- explains that in the event of non-compliance, staff may ask visitors to leave.

Who else can enter a residential aged care facility?

Other than a resident's family and loved ones, there are limitations on the services that can enter a residential aged care facility. Essential services include:

- **Regular staff** of the service who provide clinical care, food services, administrative functions, cleaning and other essential non-clinical contractors.
- **Other visiting clinical staff** such as visiting medical officers, general practitioners, geriatricians, palliative care physicians and other medical specialists; pharmacy services; specialist nurses; diagnostics services; and allied health services, for example, physiotherapists.

Other services that are permitted under the Directions include those providing **behavioural support services** and **functional and well-being support services**, for example: hairdressing, diversional and recreational therapies, music therapies.

This means clinical visits will be limited to essential assessments and management for residents' health conditions, including assessment and management of coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms.

Other assessments and clinical activities may be postponed if they do not have adverse impacts on the health of the resident. Non-essential service providers cannot enter the facility.

What measures should be put in place for those providing services in residential aged care?

The following measures must be in place for service providers attending an aged care facility:

- The person has been asked to confirm that they have been vaccinated against influenza
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) screening:
 - That they have not arrived in Australia from overseas in the last 14 days, and
 - That they have not had known contact in the last 14 days with a person who is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), and
 - They do not have a temperature over 37.5 degrees, or symptoms of acute respiratory infection, and
 - That they have not been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) and not yet been given clearance from isolation.
- Compliance with all Deputy Chief Health Officer Directions, including the above requirements and the restrictions on persons aged under 16 years entering a care facility.
- All other usual police checks, statutory declarations and public liability insurance completed as per requirements for contractors.

Can building works continue at residential aged care services?

Yes, if there are no confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) cases at the service, if the works are necessary and with the following measures in place:

- No contact with residents
- Physical distancing maintained
- Evidence of influenza vaccinations confirmed for workers, including contractors
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) screening of workers, including contractors, to ensure:
 - That they have not arrived in Australia from overseas in the last 14 days, and
 - That they have not had known contact in the last 14 days with a person who is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), and
 - They do not have a temperature over 37.5 degrees, or symptoms of acute respiratory infection, and
 - That they have not been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) and not yet been given clearance from isolation.
- Compliance with all Deputy Chief Health Officer Directions, including the above requirements and the restrictions on persons aged under 16 years entering a care facility.
- All other usual police checks, statutory declarations and public liability insurance completed as per requirements for contractors.

Can tradespeople and waste collectors attend residential aged care services?

Yes, if there are no confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) cases at the service, if the work is necessary and with the following measures in place:

- No contact with residents
- Physical distancing maintained
- Evidence of influenza vaccinations confirmed, including contractors and tradespeople
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) screening of workers, including contractors and tradespeople, to ensure:
 - That they have not arrived in Australia from overseas in the last 14 days, and
 - That they have not had known contact in the last 14 days with a person who is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), and
 - They do not have a temperature over 37.5 degrees, or symptoms of acute respiratory infection, and
 - That they have not been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) and not yet been given clearance from isolation.
- Compliance with all Deputy Chief Health Officer Directions, including the above requirements and the restrictions on persons aged under 16 years entering a care facility.
- All other usual police checks, statutory declarations and public liability insurance completed as per requirements for contractors.
- For waste collectors, please note:
- if the waste collectors are entering the premises, including outdoor areas used by residents and if there are no confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) cases at the service, the same measures would apply as for other contractors.
- If the waste collectors are not entering the premises or outdoor areas used by residents, they are not required to have the influenza vaccination.

What proof is required to comply with this part of the Direction?

While this is a decision for each RACF, it is recommended that written evidence be provided to the RACF.

- Example: notice of vaccination from the dispensing pharmacist/health practitioner; letter from general practitioner advising of medical contraindication and therefore exemption from influenza vaccinations requirement.

This information should be collected as part of the RACFs routine immunisation record keeping so that written evidence only needs to be provided once and staff can look up records or provide a local pass to allow for speed of access for those for whom immunisation status has already been confirmed.

Information about influenza vaccination requirements can be found here: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

How can I make a complaint?

If you or a family member or loved one is unhappy with how a facility is managing visitors, contact the facility manager or director of nursing to discuss your concerns.

If this discussion does not resolve the matter, you can contact the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to make a complaint. The Commission can be contacted [on their website](https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint) [<https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint>](https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint) or on 1800 951 822.

Where can I get more information?

The Victorian and Commonwealth governments have developed coronavirus (COVID-19) aged care specific websites with resources and guidelines.

The situation and actions required are changing. We recommend you regularly check these websites, and subscribe to updates:

Department of Health and Human Services (Victoria)

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-update>

Department of Health (Commonwealth)

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/advice-for-people-at-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-in-aged-care-facilities>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts>

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/ACQSC_Visitor_restrictions_V6.pdf