



Directions update: Residential Aged Care

Employers and workers

19 October 2020

Balancing safety and wellbeing

Based on expert public health advice, National and State directions have been issued to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and protect residents, as older people are at higher risk of suffering severe illness or death if they contract the virus.

Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) are required to take into account residents' physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing when implementing these restrictions.

Several Public Health directions apply to workers and employers of RACFs. The key changes across the range of Directions are summarised in this factsheet.

Cleaning and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements

RACFs are required to comply with cleaning and PPE in accordance with DHHS requirements.

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

Mobility restrictions for workers

Workers from an outbreak site

A worker from a site that has an outbreak cannot commence work at any RACF other site without first isolating for 14 days (without working at any site) and presenting a negative test result (where they were tested no more than 4 days prior to commencement at the new site).

Worker from a restricted zone

Where a worker has worked at a site in a Restricted Zone (e.g. metropolitan Melbourne) they cannot work at a RACF site outside the restricted zone (e.g. Regional Victoria) unless they have no COVID-19 symptoms; a negative test result and have isolated while awaiting the test result.

One site One Worker*

Workers are still required to work at only one site as much as practicable. If a worker must work at more than one site, they are still required to declare if and where they have worked before beginning their shift.

*Please refer to the Workplace Directions, Clauses 7(17)-(20)

Worker and visitor Declarations:

Staff* and visitors to RACFs are now required to declare in writing at the start of each shift but before entering a Work Premises that the worker:

1. is free of COVID-19 related symptoms;
2. has not been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case; AND
3. has not been directed to self-isolate or self-quarantine by an Authorised Officer.

This is complementary to the existing requirements for all staff and visitors to be checked for symptoms, including (for example) checking for a temperature over 37.5 degrees C.

Declarations can be on paper, or an app or equivalent providing it is in writing.

*This is in addition to the one site one worker declaration requirements in the Workplace Directions described above.

A worker or visitor must not enter a RACF if they:

- are not wearing a fitted face mask (unless an exception applies).
A face shield on its own is not sufficient to meet the mask requirement.
- are unwell or have even the mildest symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19):
 - fever or temperature over 37.5 degrees
 - loss or change in sense of smell or taste, chills or sweats, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, and/or runny nose

If there are any symptoms however mild, a negative test is required

- have coronavirus (COVID-19) (and you are currently required to isolate or quarantine or have been in contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) within the last 14 days and you are currently required to isolate or quarantine
- have been tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) and not yet received your result
- have arrived in Australia from overseas in the last 14 days.

Asymptomatic (Surveillance) Testing

RACFs are required to carry out asymptomatic testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) on its employees and contractors (clinical and non-clinical) where directed by the Chief Health Officer (or their delegate), and in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Department will advise RACFs of COVID-19 asymptomatic testing requirements.

Records of asymptomatic testing of workers must be kept by the RACF.

RACFs to retain records:

All RACFs are required to retain records to demonstrate compliance with the directions, including (but not limited to):

- COVIDSafe plan
- Work rosters
- Logs created to monitor the directions
- Time and attendance information
- Payroll data
- Worker and visitor logs, including contact details and declarations
- Surveillance testing of employees and contractors.

RACFs are required to take all reasonable steps to protect personal information from use or disclosure (other than disclosure to an Authorised Officer, for example, for use in contact tracing by the Public Health Unit at the Department of Health and Human Services).

Grace period

Record keeping for new requirements (such as worker and visitor declarations) are required to be in place by 26 October 2020.

Changes to visitor restrictions

These are in addition to the changes to the Care Facilities Directions made on 27 September 2020.

Visitor restriction changes for RACFs

Under 16 year olds are no longer excluded from being a visitor RACFs. A visitor that is under 16 must comply with all visitation requirements, for example mask requirements*, hand washing, and being symptom free.

*People over 12 should wear a mask (unless an exception applies), people under 12 may wear a mask, people under 2 should not wear a mask.

Regional Victoria

A single household can now visit a resident at a RACF outside the restricted zone (i.e. in Regional Victoria). Density quotients* that limit the number of people in a space (the same as what exists for current shop spaces) applies.

Density: For indoor spaces, 4m² per person with a cap of 10 people in any space. For outdoors, 2m² per person.

For example, a space 5m×5m = 25m². This would mean 6 people indoors (25÷4=6), or 12 people if it was an outdoor space (25÷2=12.5).

Hairdressers are also allowed to attend RACFs in Regional Victoria.

*Refer: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/information-business-and-industry-faqs-regional-victoria>

Specific Direction Changes:

Care Facilities Directions (No.14) significant changes:

- Removal of under 16s from the excluded visitors list in Cl.5
- Household can now visit residents Cl.7(2)(c) in Regional Victoria
- Hairdressers are permitted workers in Regional Victoria Cl.6(1)(c)(iii)
- Visitors must make declarations Cl.8(2).

Worker (Additional Industry Obligations) Directions (No.9) significant changes:

- Record keeping requirements Cl.6(5) and (5A)
- Workers not allowed to attend Care Facility while symptomatic and awaiting test results Cl.7(2)
- Worker declarations Cl.7(67)
- Surveillance testing Cl.7(68)
- Worker from outbreak site Cl.7(69)
- Worker from restricted zone Cl.7(70)
- Exemptions from the outbreak site or restricted zone worker requirements Cl.7(72)
- Cleaning and PPE requirements Cl.7(71).

See: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19