

COVID-19



Bulletin #45

28 Jan
2022

**NEWSLETTERS will be distributed in preparation and following opening of Tasmanian borders– will be fortnightly/monthly depending on changes in Australia / Tasmania.
(Last Newsletter –20 Jan 2022)**

COVID cases continue in Tasmania and instructions on how to interact, when to get tested and when to isolate gets reviewed / changed by government from time to time based on Public Health advice.

For Tasmanian Government updates please see link:

<https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au/facts/important-community-updates-covid19>

We will use a Frequently Asked Questions format to try to get information to staff, volunteers and clients to help make safe decisions while out and interacting in our community.

Please note- due to the rapid changes we are all experiencing- some directions/actions given today may quickly change and no longer be relevant tomorrow.

Question: I understand staff in Residential Aged Care are getting Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs). South Eastern Community Care do not have RATs or test staff. Why?

Answer: At this stage, Public Health does not recommend routine testing or screening for staff in community services. Individuals with symptoms are able to access RATs through the COVID-19 Hotline by calling 1800 671 738 or registering via the form. In Residential Care, Staff and vulnerable people are in a more closed in/ crowded environment, with multiple staff working up to eight (even ten) hour shifts. The Government has supplied tests for Residential Care Facilities, in particular, during an outbreak. A Nurse has to undertake these tests, and they are not provided or given to individual staff to do themselves (currently). While we are supporting vulnerable people, the community setting is quite different and the Rapid Antigen Test is not recommended by Public Health as a regular check for asymptomatic staff going about their duty. If a staff member has COVID symptoms- they must have a test as per Public Health directions and in this case the RAT is provided by the State. If a worker is not well- even if it is not COVID they must stay away from work in any case to get well, and for the protection of their workmates and clients.

Question: I am a client, and I have tested positive for COVID. Can I still get services?

Answer: Your Coordinator will work out with you if there is anything you need during the period you will be in quarantine with COVID. Non-essential visits will be delayed until you have been released by Public Health. We may undertake phone checks rather than in-person checks. Our Staff can assist arrange groceries or items to your home. If you have an essential service that cannot be delayed- any



Staff who come to your home will be wearing mask, goggles, and long sleeve gown and will need to dispose of them in your general rubbish after they have left the house. It is possible – if you have services that cannot be delayed- that the staff who visit are not your regular staff- this would be discussed with you by the Coordinator.

Question: I am living with someone who is COVID Positive. I have isolated for the seven days with them, and they are now day seven and have been told they can leave isolation. Can I come back to work?

Answer: This depends on advice from Public Health 1800 671 738. Public Health say you need to isolate for seven days from last contact with someone COVID positive. If you have been able to keep separated, Public Health consider you are able to be released at same time as your household contacts release. If you have not been able to stay separate Public Health may direct you to isolate for a further seven days (i.e. the last day the COVID person was in isolation may be considered your last contact and therefore the commencement of your isolation period). Public Health advice is that this is decided/determined on a case by case basis- **and SEC Care cannot definitively give you an answer- you MUST seek Public Health advice.**

Question: If a client was confirmed as having COVID, and I visited them what do I do?

Answer: If we are informed a client has tested positive, we would check the roster/schedule and inform staff who have visited in the time they were likely unwell. Staff would not be deemed as close contacts and do not need to quarantine, we would ask you to monitor for symptoms.

Question: I have heard/been informed a client had COVID, and I was in their home for a three hour Social Support visit. I was wearing my mask. What do I do?

Answer: You do NOT meet the criteria for close contact, and you do not need to isolate or do anything different. HOWEVER- you should monitor for symptoms and if they develop you must contact Public Health to get a COVID test. You should also inform your Manager- if we get more information/need to change advice we will let you know.

- See definition of close contact from Tasmania Public Health here: [Advice for case contacts | Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

Question: I have a chronic disease, and have a reduced immune system, can I work?

Answer: Yes, you are able to go about your business in the community, including your work as a Community Worker/ Office based staff member. However- we encourage you to let Helen know as we will endeavour to remove you from a client/participant household if the household has a positive COVID case (for the infectious period).

Question: I have been directed to isolate, can I get paid leave?

Answer: if you have been directed to isolate by Public Health, please give proof to SEC Care and you can be paid from your existing Personal Leave. If you have no Personal Leave, you may access Annual



Leave, take leave without pay or access Long Service Leave (certain restrictions and minimum amounts of time off/payments apply).

Also: There may be Government Grants you can apply for- but you need to have used all of your personal and annual leave to be entitled to Government payment/s.

Question: I am feeling quite anxious, and even angry at times with all these changes and the conflicting information. Why can't I get a simple answer to my query?

Answer: We are entering the third year of COVID, and most of us are feeling fatigued and frustrated. As COVID cases rise many staff and clients are also feeling very anxious and wondering if the work environment is safe. Because definitions and directions from Government are based on Health Advice and vary as the number of cases, COVID variants, border restrictions, etc. all change it is impossible for us as your employer/provider to give you a definite answer and say it will be the same next week! There are a number of Organisation where you may be able to get support/talk if your mental health is suffering:

What online and telephone mental health support services are available?

Beyond Blue has launched the [Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#) — a dedicated service for people who need counselling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Call 1800 512 348 to speak with a trained [mental health](#) professional (24 hours, 7 days a week).

Lifeline provides support to people experiencing emotional distress. You can speak with a trained crisis supporter:

- over the phone on 13 11 14, available 24 hours 7 days a week
- through online chat, every night from 7pm to midnight AET
- via text on 0477 13 11 14, between 6pm and midnight AET, 7 days a week

Kids Helpline offers counselling to children and young adults (aged 5 to 25). Call 1800 55 1800 or go to kidshelpline.com.au.

Young people can get support through **headspace centres** — whether in person at a centre, online or over the phone. There are more than 100 headspace centres across Australia.

The **Raising Healthy Minds app**, developed by the Raising Children Network, has information, ideas and guidance for parents to help them provide support for their child's mental health and wellbeing. Free from Google Play and the App Store.

24/7 Mental Health Services

Is it an emergency? If you or someone you know is at immediate risk of harm, call triple zero (000)

Suicide Call Back Service Anyone thinking about suicide suicidecallbackservice.org.au 1300 459 467	Lifeline Anyone facing a personal crisis lifeline.org.au 13 11 14
Beyond Blue Anyone feeling anxious or depressed beyondblue.org.au 1300 22 4636	Kids Helpline Counselling for young people aged 5 to 25 kidshelpline.com.au 1800 55 1800
MensLine Australia Men with emotional or relationship concerns mensline.org.au 1300 79 99 79	Open Arms Intimate and family counselling openarms.gov.au (0800 01) 046

healthdirect

[Print or download this mental health helplines infographic.](#)



Question: Where can I get more information?

Answer: You can call or email Michelle, Barry, Helen or Sharon. If urgent- please call, don't rely on emails for prompt responses! You can check the Tasmanian Government information [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

Question: Do I need a Booster/ third COVID vaccination?

Answer: We are reporting to the Government numbers of staff with Booster. It is not mandatory at this stage. We encourage you all to get the booster as soon as you can for your safety and to help reduce the spread of COVID.

YOUR WELLBEING

You can contact Your Manager if you want to query any practices, unsure of what to do, or need help/advice.

Our EAP partner is Positive Solutions who are available at any time and for any reason. You can contact them with confidentiality assured on 1800 064 039.

Relating to COVID19- if you have any respiratory symptoms , feel unwell with cough of fever, sore throat or shortness of breath– please phone your GP or the Tasmanian Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738.

**DO NOT COME TO WORK, EVEN IF YOU HAVE ONLY MILD SYMPTOMS-
GET ADVICE AND GET TESTED!**

THANK YOU for everything you are doing to stay safe and to care for vulnerable people in our community:

Helen, Michelle, Barry and Sharon