COVID-19 Outbreak Preparedness
Assessment for Residential Aged Care Facilities

This document is designed to guide and support Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) to assess their preparedness for a potential COVID-19 outbreak. An Outbreak Management Checklist for COVID-19 is also available to monitor the response in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak.

This preparedness assessment document is directly informed by the Infection Prevention and Control COVID-19 (Sars-Cov-2) – Residential & Aged Care Facilities, the Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (2020), Protocol to support joint management of a COVID-19 outbreak in a RACF in NSW and the experiences of Infection Prevention & Control Professionals where they have supported RACFs to respond, monitor and close outbreaks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 is a significant health risk for the elderly and those with co-morbidities, low immunity and living in communal environments. RACFs are legally required to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to infection prevention and control under the Aged Care Act 1997, the Aged Care Quality Standards and by adopting standard and transmission-based precautions as directed in the Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (2019) and state/territory public health authorities.

Identify that a single positive COVID-19 case within a RACF (resident or staff member) will trigger the protocol and the Outbreak Management Plan

RACF should expect that additional capacity and resources will be needed to prepare and respond to a potential or confirmed outbreak.

CDNA definition of an outbreak: **Declaring an Outbreak**

A COVID-19 outbreak is defined as **a single confirmed case of COVID-19 in a resident, staff member or frequent attendee of a RCF.**

This definition does not include a single case in an infrequent visitor of the facility.

A determination of whether someone is a frequent or infrequent visitor may be based on frequency of visits, time spent in the setting, and number of contacts within the setting.

While the definitions above provide guidance, the state/territory PHU will assist the RCF in deciding whether to declare an outbreak. Public health units may advise that the facility should take some actions where an outbreak is suspected, whilst awaiting laboratory confirmation.

Governance

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Update and make available a comprehensive, adaptable Outbreak Management Plan to identify and respond rapidly to a COVID-19 outbreak	
A clear governance structure is documented for all aspects of the Outbreak Management Plan, ensuring a coordinated approach between clinical and operational functions (including the interaction with relevant external partners and agencies)	
Establish an Outbreak Management Team that is appropriate to the size and staffing of the facility. Members may include: • An Infection Prevention and Control/Outbreak Coordinator • CEO/Facility Manager • Cleaning Services manager • Catering manager • Laundry Manager • Senior Nursing staff • Allied health representative • Educator • Others eg Infectious Diseases Physician, Clinical Microbiologist • Representative from LHD • Representative from Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing	
Prioritise direct reporting from the Outbreak Management Team (nominated spokesperson) to the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation	
Educate all members of the Outbreak Management Team of their roles and responsibilities and plan regular meetings to update the Outbreak Management Plan (based on current evidence and risks)	
Identify and engage an external Infection Prevention and Control specialist to support preparedness for a potential COVID-19 outbreak, where required	
The Outbreak Management Plan is supported by surrounding health services to respond to an outbreak as per NSW Health and Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission protocol	

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Identify that a single positive COVID-19 case within a RACF (resident or staff member) will trigger the above protocol and the Outbreak Management Plan	
Plan to include decisions regarding staff who work across multiple facilities or who have secondary employment	

Outbreak Management Plan

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Ensure the Outbreak Management Plan for COVID-19 includes: • Screening, early recognition and containment of residents and staff with suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 • Application of standard precautions including hand hygiene, correct use of PPE and respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette • Implementation of transmission-based precautions • Physical distancing for residents, visitors and staff • Identification of potential isolation/cohorting room(s) or zoning areas for containment • Communication strategy for residents, family members, staff, suppliers, volunteers and escalation requirements • Environmental cleaning and cleaning of shared equipment. Allocation of roles and responsibilities • Catering and food supply for residents • Management of linen and waste • Testing processes that includes testing residents and/or staff • Contingency plans for staffing levels • Education and assessment of staff related to infection prevention and control strategies including PPE and cleaning • Safe visiting practices/visiting restrictions • General Practitioner communication and visits, including telehealth options • Plan for PPE stock management • Plan for the unique circumstances and challenges in managing a continued supply of 'urgent use' medications. This should include palliative care medications and syringe drivers • Increased use of oxygen supplies and equipment	

Preparedness item	Yes/No
• The review of CPAP/BiPAP as a COVID-19 positive resident who uses this equipment will require contact/droplet/airborne precautions and isolation	
Designate an Infection Prevention and Control/Outbreak Coordinator and ensure direct reporting and access to the Chief Executive and Executive leadership team	
Develop a daily monitoring checklist relating to key elements of the Outbreak Management Plan for the Infection Prevention and Control/Outbreak Coordinator	
Develop a template for daily briefing meeting for the Outbreak Response Team that includes: situation, pathology results and testing, strategies, communication, education, barriers/challenges, staffing levels, escalation requirements, reports, family/visitor issues, resident issues/changes to condition/transfers, supply and stock levels	
Plan to include a site map of the facility.	
Prepare an electronic list of all residents in the facility including their location (building and room number) within the facility and their DOB (excel format) – keep up to date.	
Ensure that visitor logs must include legible names, date, time, who they visited and contact numbers. This will be required electronically during an outbreak situation for contact tracing – (excel format).	
Consider sourcing an infection prevention and control expert to be onsite each day to assist with education, PPE compliance, resident isolation, standard and transmission based precautions compliance, environmental cleaning auditing. This will be scalable and based on the number of residents/staff exposed or infected with COVID-19.	

Resident Care

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Identify residents who may be at greater risk (e.g. due to presence of chronic disease)	
Update health records and representative contact details for all residents	

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Ensure a program is in place to offer residents annual influenza vaccination, records of these vaccinations are kept and the benefits of vaccination are promoted. Ensure resident pneumococcal vaccination is up to date	
Update the advanced care directive for each resident	
Organise GP review of all residents currently prescribed nebulisers (regular or as required) to evaluate change of these to metered aerosols with spacers where clinically appropriate	
Identify residents who would be suitable for telehealth options	
Ensure there is a regular review of residents clinical symptoms and they are documented	

Information and Education for Staff, Residents and Families

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Update and educate staff on general IP&C, the Outbreak Management Plan and related policies and protocols for COVID-19	
Ensure all staff can demonstrate competency in standard precautions including: • Hand hygiene • PPE selection • PPE donning and doffing • Cleaning of shared equipment between residents • Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette • Cleaning • Waste and linen management	
Ensure all staff can demonstrate understanding and have been assessed on transmission-based precautions (donning and doffing), hand hygiene and PPE waste management. Understanding of PPE requirements and hand hygiene when in the room with residents, performing procedures and care requirements.	

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Identify where education records of staff in standard and transmission based precautions, basic infection prevention and control; and PPE competencies are maintained and located	
Educate staff on the transmission, recognition and importance of early reporting of potential COVID-19 symptoms (both in the elderly population and themselves) as these symptoms may be different (elderly have more subtle changes to their condition such as feeling drowsy, loss of appetite, pallor changes)	
Educate staff on work restrictions relating to risk factors, the need to seek COVID-19 testing if symptomatic and to stay at home until test results are known	
Organise the provision of clear information for residents and families regarding cough/sneeze etiquette and hand hygiene and what to do if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 or another respiratory illness	
Provide access to hand hygiene products suitable for staff, residents and visitors	

External Partnerships, Relationships and Communication

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Review and update contact information for: • Local Public Health Unit • GPs and other external allied health • Local Hospitals • Workforce/volunteers • Facility management • Suppliers • Pathology service • Primary Health Network	
Organise signage for entrances and reception to inform visitors to self-identify if they have any symptoms of COVID-19, travel history or exposure. Prepare visitors for changing visiting procedures and processes.	

Identify and coordinate with local emergency operations, local health/hospital, health networks (see links in references)	
Nominate media spokesperson, if required	

Equipment and Resources

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Develop Outbreak kits (PPE, cleaning equipment, signage, testing equipment etc) and ensure they are checked and stock levels maintained	
Ensure stockpiles are sufficient to meet surge demand due to a COVID-19 outbreak - Develop a checklist for daily auditing of stock levels	
Ensure stocked PPE, hand hygiene, diagnostic materials and cleaning products are quality assured and meet Clinical Excellence Commission guidelines: http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/keep-patients-safe/COVID-19/Personal-Protective-Equipment-PPE	
Negotiate rapid access to emergency stock with external partners should a stock supply issue occur Develop a monitoring guide on daily PPE usage Understand the Australian Standards and the requirements for PPE (quality of PPE)	

Workforce Actions

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Develop workforce strategies to support a rapid surge of staffing that may be required to respond to the first confirmed, suspected or probable case of COVID-19, or to deal with a rapid deterioration of the situation during an outbreak	
Develop workforce strategies to support resident care and the outbreak management plan, should a substantial portion of substantive staff become ill or be placed into self-quarantine	

Ensure a program is in place to offer staff (including contractors and volunteers) influenza vaccination, records of these vaccinations are kept and the benefits of vaccination are promoted	

Cleaning, Catering and Laundry

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Identify a person to be responsible for overseeing increased frequency of cleaning, liaison with contractors or hiring extra cleaning staff	
Identify a person to be responsible for overseeing increased frequency of laundry services, liaison with contractors or hiring extra laundry staff	
Identify a person to be responsible for overseeing changes to meal delivery and pick up services	

Exit Strategy for an Outbreak

Preparedness item	Yes/No
Identify factors that will determine the end of the outbreak ie number of incubation periods	
Declare that the outbreak is over	
Complete an outbreak report	
Communication and debriefing following the outbreak	
Revise the COVID-19 Outbreak Plan based on debriefing recommendations	

References

- Communicable Diseases Network Australia (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidelines for outbreaks in residential aged care facilities. Australian Government Department of Health. https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidelines-for-outbreaks-in-residential-care-facilities
- Communicable Diseases Network Australia (2020). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Australian Government Department of Health. https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm
- Infection Control Expert Group (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidelines for infection prevention and control in residential care facilities. Australian Government Department of Health. 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
- Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare, Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council (2019). https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-prevention-and-control-infection-healthcare-2019
- NSW Health Residential aged care facility outbreak management https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/racf-outbreak-management.aspx
- Protocol to support joint management of a COVID-19 outbreak in a residential aged care facility in NSW Protocol to support joint management of a COVID-19 outbreak in a residential aged care facility (RACF) in NSW
- NSW COVID-19 Incident Action Plan https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Documents/racf-incident-plan.pdf
- COVID outbreak governance – residential aged care facilities https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Documents/racf-outbreak-roles.pdf
- When to use PPE in aged care https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-when-to-use-personal-protective-equipment-in-aged-care
- Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) – COVID-19 Resources https://lasa.asn.au/covid-19

Acknowledgement: