



COVID-19 guidelines for Western Australian homelessness sector

This guideline has been developed by the Department of Health (DoH) in Western Australia (WA) to support people working in the homelessness sector who may provide accommodation and support to people with **suspected** or **confirmed COVID-19**.

It is important to note that information is continually being updated. Where possible, links to relevant documents or websites are provided. Homelessness sector workers also need to refer to their organisation’s workplace policies and procedures.

The objectives of this guideline are to:

1. ensure understanding and application of public health requirements
2. support containment strategies for COVID-19 through accurate, timely and coordinated information
3. mitigate and minimise impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the homelessness sector, health system and broader community.

Principle

Any public health advice given by the WA DoH will depend on the stage of the WA COVID-19 response.

Roles

WA health system	Advice regarding the prevention, detection and management of COVID-19 in WA and responsibilities linked to <i>Public Health Act 2016</i> under the State of Emergency declared in WA.
Department of Communities	Coordination of WA Government partnerships with the community sector and issues for vulnerable cohorts in the WA community.
Commonwealth DoH	The lead agency for monitoring and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic across Australia.
Homelessness sector - includes organisations that provide accommodation to people that are homeless	Organisational responsibilities including complying with State and Commonwealth directives related to COVID-19 and complying with pre-existing responsibilities, including safety and quality and contractual obligations.

Infection control

Practising effective hand and sneeze/cough hygiene, and staying home when unwell, are the best defences against most viruses, including COVID-19.

Homelessness sector workers (including volunteers) are encouraged to undertake infection control training, such as the Commonwealth DoH's online COVID-19 training at <https://covid-19training.gov.au/>

Hand Hygiene Australia produces many resources well suited to Infection Control in hospital and community settings, including: <https://www.hha.org.au/component/jdownloads/send/34-posters/74-poster9>

All efforts should be made to strengthen infection control practices to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Further links for Infection Control can be found at https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus and <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guide-for-home-care-providers>

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE should be used in specific circumstances, such as when individuals are suspected or confirmed with COVID-19. Further information and a decision tree for PPE usage can be found at: <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/Corp/Documents/Health-for/Infectious-disease/COVID19/COVID19-Use-of-PPE-for-workers-in-community-settings.ashx>

Organisations should be continuing to obtain PPE from their usual or alternative suppliers. If an organisation has exhausted PPE capacity from suppliers, information on an alternative method is found at: https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus/Advice-on-how-to-access-Personal-Protective-Equipment

Testing for COVID-19

In WA, the current criteria for testing for COVID-19 are described at <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/Corp/Documents/Health-for/Infectious-disease/COVID19/COVID19-Testing-guidelines-4.ashx>

Testing locations are listed at https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/COVID-clinics

For support to arrange domiciliary testing contact your GP who can refer for testing (if indicated) via an approved pathology provider.

Individuals can be accompanied by a homelessness sector worker (worker) for testing. Please see current PPE guidelines for infection prevention advice.

Transport options for an individual suspected or confirmed of COVID19

If the individual requires urgent medical attention, call an ambulance and inform the ambulance service that the individual is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

Contact 13 COVID (132 68 43) helpline to organise transport to alternative self-isolation accommodation. Press selection number 3.

If a private vehicle or a Department of Health organised transport option cannot be provided when patients are required to travel from hospital to their home/hotel or hotel to home, taxis and ride hail services are to be used as a last resort for transportation of known or suspected COVID-19 cases.

<https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/Corp/Documents/Health-for/Infectious-disease/COVID19/COVID19-Information-for-public-private-transport.ashx>

Homelessness sector facilities checklists:

1) Response to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 for individuals living in homelessness facilities

- If a person has symptoms, arrange clinical assessment (which may include GP) and testing, if indicated.
- While awaiting test results, the person must be isolated and interactions with others must be minimised. If it is not possible to isolate the individual at the facility contact 13 COVID (132 68 43) to organise alternative accommodation. Press selection number 3.
- If positive for COVID-19, the WA DoH Public Health Operations unit will be notified by the pathologist involved and will contact the individual to facilitate contact tracing.
- If COVID-19 is confirmed, the individual may continue to stay at the facility in self-isolation (as guided by Public Health Operations advice) or may be transferred to an appropriate alternative accommodation setting if it is not possible to provide self-isolation at the facility. Contact 13 COVID (132 68 43) helpline to organise alternative accommodation. Press selection number 3.
- If the individual becomes clinically unwell they should be transferred via ambulance to hospital (with the ambulance service notified in advance that the individual has suspected or confirmed COVID-19).
- Bring along any useful written information to be provided to the hospital healthcare team (for example, medications, emergency contacts).
- If the individual is admitted to hospital, homelessness sector workers may not be able to stay with the individual. It should be noted that this will be reviewed by the healthcare team on a case by case basis. Regular contact will be made with the individual's emergency contacts throughout the hospital stay.
- Inform family, carers and/or advocates and other support services as required.

2) Response to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 for homelessness sector workers

- Workers who develop symptoms of respiratory illness need to be excluded from the work setting immediately and remain away while a diagnosis is obtained.
- Arrange clinical assessment (including GP, as appropriate, and/or COVID-19 clinic) and testing, if indicated. The worker should tell their doctor of the circumstances.
- If positive for COVID-19, the worker must notify their employer as soon as is practicable. Management of close contacts will occur via the Public Health Operations unit who are automatically notified of a confirmed case.
- If COVID-19 is confirmed, then the worker must remain in isolation and be excluded from all work that involves contact with others until they are approved for release from isolation by the Public Health Operations unit (the individual will be given written confirmation of their approval to cease isolation).
- If COVID-19 is excluded, then the worker's return to work should be guided by the infections period for their diagnosed condition.
- If a worker has been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case or close contact of a confirmed case, and did not wear PPE, they must notify their employer. Staff will need to self-isolate for 14 days and be alert for symptoms of COVID-19.
- If a worker has been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case or close contact of a confirmed case, while wearing PPE, the worker can continue to deliver care to the individual however should remain vigilant regarding any symptoms and self-isolate and seek testing should they become symptomatic. However, if PPE was knowingly not used correctly, staff should self-isolate for 14 days. The WA DoH can provide advice regarding whether PPE was used correctly.

3) Hospital discharge of confirmed case of COVID-19 (individual)

- The hospital healthcare team will decide when the individual is able to be discharged. The individual may still be COVID-19 positive on discharge.
- The individual's health care team will discuss discharge and transport arrangements with the individual and support services. If the individual requires accommodation, care and support following discharge, this will be arranged.
- Upon discharge, the individual will be referred to their GP or Homeless Healthcare who will be responsible for the individual's ongoing medical care.
- If required, PPE recommendations and supplies will be organised to ensure continued care of the individual at accommodation.
- Following discharge from hospital, individuals will be monitored via phone by the Public Health Operations unit until no longer infectious.

Supports

A range of supports are available to individuals and homelessness sector care workers, including:

- Non-urgent medical assistance
 - Contact their GP or Homeless Healthcare on 6260 2092
 - If unable to contact GP, phone Healthdirect - 1800 022 222
- Urgent medical assistance
 - Phone 000 and let them know individual is in isolation due to COVID-19
- Assistance with accommodation, food and/or other essential items
 - Phone the Department of Communities Disaster Response Hotline - 1800 032 965
- Emergency dental assistance
 - Phone 0429 441 162
- Mental health assistance
 - Mental Health Emergency Response Line
<https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/getting-help/helplines/mental-health-response-line/>
- Transport assistance
 - Contact 13 COVID (132 68 43) helpline. Choose Option 3.
- For more information, please refer to the Healthy WA website
 - https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus or
 - Phone 13 COVID (132 68 43).

References

Resources related to this advice and other COVID-19 related information is available on the Department of Health website. Regular review of the website is recommended to ensure you are accessing the most up to date information which will be updated regularly.

Further health information, including clinic locations, is on <http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au> Information and advice on the novel coronavirus called COVID-19 for the community and businesses in WA is available at <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/coronavirus-covid-19>

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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