

Frequently Asked Questions

Emergency Management (Residential Aged Care Facilities No 2) (COVID-19) Direction 2020

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 within South Australia, on 27 March 2020, the State Coordinator made a Direction under the *Emergency Management Act 2004* to limit entry into residential aged care facilities in South Australia.

The *Emergency Management (Residential Aged Care Facilities) (COVID-19) Direction 2020* has now been revoked and replaced by the *Emergency Management (Residential Aged Care Facilities No 2) (COVID-19) Direction 2020*. The updated Direction clarifies the restrictions and exemptions that apply.

All providers of residential aged care and members of the public are urged to read the full direction: [Emergency Management \(Residential Aged Care Facilities No 2\) \(COVID-19\) Direction 2020](#)

Do I have to follow the direction contained within the *Emergency Management (Residential Aged Care Facilities No 2) (COVID-19) Direction 2020*?

Yes. The operator of a residential aged care facility in South Australia must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a person does not enter or remain on the premises of the residential aged care facility if the person is prohibited from doing so under the Direction.

It is an offence to breach this Direction and fines may be issued for non-compliance.

When did the Direction commence operation?

The new Direction came into effect on 10 April 2020 at 0001hrs.

Are family and friends still able to visit their loved one in a residential aged care facility?

Yes. Under the Direction, visits for the purpose of providing care and support to a resident are permitted, however, the following guidelines should be followed:

- > Visits should be limited to a short duration.
- > Only one social support visit is permitted per day, of one person or two persons visiting together. These visitors may include immediate social supports (for example, family members or close friends) or advocacy support.
- > Visits should be conducted in a resident's room, outdoors, or in a specific area designated by the residential aged care facility, rather than communal areas.
- > Social distancing of 1.5m should be adhered to wherever possible.

In addition, the following people are not permitted to visit:

- > A person who has returned from outside of South Australia (whether from overseas or interstate) in the last **14** days.
- > A person who has been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last **14** days.
- > A person with a fever (>38) or symptoms of acute respiratory infection.
- > From 1 May 2020 – A person who has not had the 2020 seasonal influenza vaccination.

Frequently Asked Questions

- > A child aged 16 years or less, except if they are providing end of life support to a resident.

Compassionate visits

- > Aged care providers are asked to take particular care to balance the need to protect residents, staff and others from the risk of transmission of COVID-19, while supporting the rights and wellbeing of residents and their families. Particular care and compassion should be given to people in palliative care and those nearing end of life.

Will residents of a residential aged care facility still receive health, medical and pharmaceutical services?

Yes. Health, medical and pharmaceutical services must still to be provided to residents and people providing those services are still allowed to visit (provided they do not fall into any of the prohibited categories listed above).

Can contractors, along with goods and services providers undertake work at an aged care facility?

Yes. Contractors and persons providing goods and services that are necessary for the effective operation of the residential aged care facility are permitted to enter and remain on site (provided they do not fall into any of the prohibited categories listed above).

Can the resident leave and then re-enter a residential aged care facility?

A resident of a residential aged care facility who leaves the facility after the Direction commenced operation will not be allowed to re-enter, subject to the following exceptions:

- > To seek medical or dental treatment.
- > To attend the funeral of a member of their immediate family.
- > The resident has dementia or another cognitive impairment and inadvertently leaves the premises without understanding the Direction or the consequences of leaving.
- > The resident would have no safe alternative accommodation.

Aged care providers should ensure the resident and their family/carer are aware of the consequences of a decision to leave the residential aged care facility, and the risks and responsibilities of providing care to the resident during that time. Written confirmation from the resident, their family/carer is advised.

Should a resident still choose to leave the residential aged care facility, they will be permitted to re-enter at such a time as the Direction is revoked. During this period, the resident will retain their security of tenure and be deemed to be on "social leave".

If a resident leaves a residential aged care facility prior to when the Direction commenced operation, is the resident prohibited from returning to the residential aged care facility?

No. Clause 3(4) of the Direction only applies to residents who leave a residential aged care facility after the date the Direction commenced operation.

Can a residential aged care facility still accept new residents?

Yes. Nothing in the Direction precludes a residential aged care facility from accommodating new residents, whether on a permanent basis or for respite care.

Frequently Asked Questions

All new residents should undertake a screening checklist for COVID-19 prior to admission.

Do I have to test new or returning residents for COVID-19?

No. The advice from Chief Public Health Officer is that pre-testing of an asymptomatic person to enter a residential aged care facility offers little value as it is unlikely that the test will return a positive result if the person does not have symptoms.

All new and returning residents should undertake a screening checklist for COVID-19 prior to admission.

Influenza vaccinations

Under the Direction, from 1 May 2020, **all staff and visitors** to a residential aged care facility must be vaccinated against 2020 seasonal influenza.

Does everyone entering a residential aged care facility need to be vaccinated?

Yes. This applies to **staff, visitors, health practitioners, volunteers and others** (for example, cleaners, tradesman, gardeners, maintenance staff).

- > The only exception is a person who has a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine (such as person who has a history of anaphylaxis or has had Guillain-Barré Syndrome following vaccination, or who is taking checkpoint inhibitor medication for cancer treatment).

What if adequate supply of the influenza vaccine is not available by 1 May 2020?

Residential aged care providers should take steps to ensure that all staff and volunteers are vaccinated prior to this date. However, if an employee or contractor is not able to access an adequate supply of the influenza vaccine by 1 May 2020, the operator of the residential aged care facility must:

- > Notify the Department for Health and Wellbeing via officeforageingwell@sa.gov.au within 2 business days of 1 May 2020; and
- > Take all reasonable steps to access adequate supply as soon as reasonably practicable after 1 May 2020.

What happens if staff do not wish to be vaccinated due to cultural, religious or other reasons?

Residential aged care providers will need to redeploy staff that are not able to be vaccinated.

Do residential aged care providers still need to provide free influenza vaccinations to staff and volunteers?

Yes. Under the Aged Care Quality Standards, residential aged care providers must offer free flu vaccinations every year to staff and volunteers, and keep records of their vaccinations.

How will aged care providers know whether visitors have been vaccinated?

Aged care providers should **seek appropriate evidence of immunisation status** from individuals seeking to enter the facility. Appropriate evidence may include a statement or record from a health practitioner, or an immunisation history statement available from Medicare online or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app. Providers may also consider maintaining records to support effective administration and to substantiate their compliance with this requirement.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will residents still have the right to refuse vaccination?

While vaccination for all residents is important to protect themselves and others against influenza, residents have the right to refuse vaccinations.

For more information

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>



Government
of South Australia

SA Health