

Information for Residential Aged Care Facilities

Residential Aged Care Facilities Emergency Management Direction

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 within South Australia, the State Coordinator has issued a Direction under the Emergency Management Act 2004 to limit entry into residential aged care facilities (RACF) in South Australia.

Due to the evolving nature of COVID-19 in the community, the Direction is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it continues to balance protecting residents, staff and others from the risk of COVID-19 transmission while supporting the rights and wellbeing of residents and their families.

To ensure they are up to date with the current requirements, all providers of residential aged care are urged to read the full [Direction](#).

Who does the Direction apply to?

Under the Direction, a residential aged care facility or RACF means:

- > Residential Aged Care Facility under the Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997; or
- > Multi-purpose Service (MPS) aged care beds funded through the Commonwealth Government Multi-purpose Service Program; or
- > State funded residential aged care beds.

The operator of a RACF in South Australia must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a person who is prohibited under the Direction does not enter or remain on the premises.

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

A separate fact sheet has been prepared to provide advice on compliance with the Direction for RACF that are co-located with other facilities, for example acute settings and retirement villages. For more information, visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare.

COVID Safe Check-In

From 10 September 2021, anyone entering a RACF, including employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors, must use [COVID SAfe Check-In](#) (QR code) to capture their relevant contact details. If they are not able to use the COVID Safe Check-In, they must sign in using a paper record.

RACF operators must display the COVID SAfe Check-In QR code at the point of entry. A paper record must be made available for people who are unable to use the COVID Safe Check-In to record their:

- > name
- > telephone number
- > date and time of the visit and departure
- > resident/area of the RACF visited.

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Workforce

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, operators of RACF must implement a number of changes to the way that employees and contractors at their facilities work.

Working across multiple RACF

RACF workers must inform their employer if they are employed at a medi-hotel and may not enter or remain on a RACF premises if they have worked in a medi-hotel in the last 14 days.

To the extent **reasonably possible**, personal care workers must not provide personal care to residents at more than one RACF.

- > Whilst personal care workers are not restricted from having secondary employment or working at more than one RACF, employers should make best endeavours to support personal care workers to work at a single RACF site as much as possible.
- > If the risk of COVID-19 in the South Australian community increases, single site restrictions on personal care workers may become mandatory.
- > Any person working at a RACF during a declared COVID-19 outbreak is prohibited from other employment for the duration of the prescribed self-quarantine period.

All employees, contractors and volunteers must notify the operator of the RACF (as soon as possible) of:

- > any additional place of employment
- > any COVID-19 case identified at their additional place of employment

Workforce Management Plans

All RACF must have in place a Workforce Management Plan that requires:

- > All employees, contractors and volunteers to provide details of any additional places of employment they may have.
- > All employees, contractors and volunteers to notify the RACF if they become aware of a case of COVID-19 being identified at any of their other places of employment.
- > All employees, contractors and volunteers to notify the RACF of any COVID-19 vaccination received (and provide evidence of same) if that vaccination was not conducted at a clinic held at the RACF.

The operator of the RACF must keep records of these notifications and provide this information to an authorised officer upon request to assist with contact tracing, if required.

For the purposes of the Workforce Management Plan, 'contractors' only include people who make up part of the RACF 'workforce'. The Plan does not need to include those people who are entering the facility on a short-term basis to provide goods or services.

Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination of residential aged care workers

Under the Direction, from **17 September 2021**, the following categories of residential aged care workers *must* have received **at least one dose** of a TGA approved COVID-19 vaccine **and have evidence of a booking to receive, or have received, a second dose**:

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- > People employed or engaged by or on behalf of a RACF (whether as an employee, contractor or agency staff) to work or perform duties at a premises of a RACF on a full time, part time or casual basis, including:
 - Direct care workers (nurses, personal care workers, allied health professionals and allied health assistants)
 - Administration staff (reception, management, administration)
 - Ancillary staff (food preparation, cleaning, laundry, garden, maintenance)
 - Lifestyle / social care (music/art therapy)
 - Transport drivers of residents of RACF.
- > Volunteers engaged by a RACF to undertake duties at a RACF.
- > Students on placement at a RACF.
- > Medical practitioners and allied health professionals who attend and provide care to residents of a RACF whether employed or engaged by the resident, RACF or another person.

COVID-19 vaccination is currently **not mandatory** for the following categories of people attending a RACF, however, it is **strongly encouraged** for everyone:

- > People providing in-reach services who are *not* employed or engaged on or behalf of the RACF (except medical practitioners and allied health professionals as above).
- > Emergency services personnel, including SA Ambulance Officers undertaking resident transport to/from hospital or providing treatment in a RACF.
- > Trades people and delivery drivers.
- > Volunteers who are not engaged by the RACF, for example community visitors providing companionship to a resident at the request of the resident.
- > Family and friends of the resident.

COVID-19 mandatory vaccination exemptions

Exemptions to the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination requirement are limited to the below circumstances:

- > **Medical exemption**
 - The RACF must be provided with a medical certificate from a legally qualified medical practitioner certifying that the person has a medical exemption from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.
 - The medical certificate must include whether the exemption is required on either a permanent or temporary basis.
 - AHPPC recommends that medical exemptions *should* be in line with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) [clinical guidance on COVID-19 vaccine in Australia in 2021](#).
- > **Pregnancy**
 - The RACF must be provided with a medical certificate must be provided from a legally qualified medical practitioner certifying that the person pregnant.
 - *Note: Pregnant women are encouraged to discuss vaccination and timing with their health professional. On 9 June 2021, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and ATAGI released a [joint statement](#)*

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recommending that pregnant women are routinely offered the Pfizer vaccine at any stage of pregnancy due to the risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 is significantly higher for pregnant women and their unborn baby.

- > **Temporary exemption granted by an authorised officer** for one of the following reasons:
 - the person is **not reasonably able to access** a COVID-19 vaccine by 17 September 2021
 - the person's work or duties at a RACF is necessary to provide for **specialist clinical care** of a resident; or
 - the person's work or duties at a RACF is **necessary to ensure maintenance of the quality of care** available to residents.
- > Requests for temporary exemptions (not medical exemptions or pregnancy) must be made in writing to the Department for Health and Wellbeing via officeforageingwell@sa.gov.au
 - Applications should be submitted by the RACF or the person's employer. All applications must include contact details of the applicant and any information relevant to the exemption request, including why that person's work or duties are necessary to provide for specialist clinical care of a resident or to ensure maintenance of the quality of care available to residents.
 - Exemptions will be granted on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of an authorised officer, for a maximum period of 4 weeks. For example, a temporary exemption may be given where it has been necessary to deploy staff at short notice to ensure continuation of quality of care at a RACF or to ensure the provision of specialist clinical care in rural settings.
 - Temporary exemptions may be granted, subject to the following conditions:
 - The unvaccinated person must continue to wear a face mask (covering mouth and nose) at all times when in the physical presence of other persons on the premises of the RACF.
 - The unvaccinated person must have weekly COVID-19 tests during the period of the temporary exemption and provide the RACF with evidence of a negative test result.
 - The Department for Health and Wellbeing will provide the the RACF with written advice (via email) about whether or not the temporary exemption has been granted by an authorised officer.

Requests for exemptions on other grounds will not be considered.

Infection Prevention and Control

PPE requirements

Currently, any person (other than a resident or a child under 12 years) must not enter or remain on the premises of a RACF, unless the person is wearing a face mask (covering mouth and nose) at all times when in the physical presence of other persons. The requirement for a mask does not apply:

- > when the person is eating or drinking;

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- > the wearing of a mask will hinder the provision of the relevant care and/or impact resident safety or wellbeing;
- > by a person who has a relevant medical condition, including problems with their breathing, a serious condition of the face, a disability or a mental health condition; or
- > in circumstances where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication, such as to enable communication by or with any person who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- > An Infection Prevention and Control in RACF - PPE fact sheet is available on the SA Health website: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare.

Sourcing PPE

- > SA Health can provide surgical masks to RACF free of charge while the wearing of masks by all staff and visitors is a mandatory requirement in the RACF Emergency Management Direction. To obtain stock, please email: HealthPSCMSCOCustomerService@sa.gov.au
- > General supply of PPE to RACF is coordinated by the Commonwealth Department of Health (DoH).
- > Aged care providers can request PPE by emailing agedcareCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au.
- > The DoH assesses all requests and may ask for more information if needed - if your request is successful, the agreed PPE will be distributed to the RACF.
- > Priority is given to aged care providers with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Training requirements

All employees or contractors who provide personal care or nursing care to residents must complete [Understanding COVID-19 for Aged Care Workers](#) infection control before being permitted to enter or remain on the premises of a RACF.

This training is available at launch.sahealth.sa.gov.au.

- > Refresher training must be completed every two months.
- > This training may be completed individually online, or undertaken in a group setting using the online training module.
- > The operator of the RACF must keep records of completion of this training.
- > These records must be provided to an authorised officer upon request.

COVID-19 Infection Control Plans

All RACF must have COVID-19 Infection Control Plan for all communal areas at the facility, approved by the Department for Health and Wellbeing:

- > A template and guidance document is available on the SA Health website: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare.
- > COVID-19 Infection Control Plans must be submitted to the Department for Health and Wellbeing via Health.COVIDInfectionControlPlan@sa.gov.au.
- > Approved COVID-19 Infection Control Plans must be kept available for inspection by authorised officers and any persons entering the RACF. It may also be published by the Department for Health and Wellbeing.

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Influenza vaccination

By 1 June 2021, **all staff and visitors** to a RACF must be vaccinated against 2021 seasonal influenza. This applies to staff, visitors, health practitioners, students, volunteers and others (for example, cleaners, tradesmen, gardeners, hairdressers, and maintenance staff).

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

Exemptions

There are a small number of exemptions to the influenza vaccination requirement:

- > 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 check point inhibitor medication for cancer treatment).
 - The visitor must provide appropriate evidence to the RACF they wish to visit, for example, a letter from a medical practitioner stating that they have a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine.
- > A person who is observing the recommended 7 day waiting period between receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine
 - The visitor will need to provide evidence of the date of receipt of a COVID-19 vaccination to the RACF and take all reasonable steps to ensure they are vaccinated as soon as is reasonably practicable following the preferred minimum interval of 7 days between administration of the COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine.
- > A person to whom the vaccine is not reasonably available.
- > Infants aged 6 months or less.
- > In the event of an emergency, emergency services personnel are permitted to enter a RACF regardless of immunisation status.
- > Visitors who have been called in to provide end of life support to a resident who have not yet received their flu vaccination, and who take all reasonable steps to get vaccinated as soon as practicable after their initial visit.
- > The SA Health Exemptions Panel has advised that unvaccinated persons are permitted to enter and remain on the premises of a RACF for the purposes of visiting a resident in the following circumstances:
 - The visitor must remain on the outdoor side of the closed window, with the resident to remain indoors.
 - Physical distancing must be maintained at all times and there must be no contact with other visitors or staff on the premises.

Note: SA Health will not consider additional requests for exemptions in relation to flu vaccination. The RACF is responsible for ensuring that prohibited persons do not enter or remain on the premises. The RACF operator is responsible for considering and accepting an unvaccinated person entering the facility under one of the exemptions, based on the evidence provided to them and appropriate documentation should be kept.

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

Residential aged care providers will need to take all reasonable steps to ensure staff who have not had the influenza vaccination, and do not fall into the listed exemptions, do not enter or remain on the premises.

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.

Visitor restrictions

Who is prohibited from visiting a RACF?

The following are not permitted to enter or remain on the premises of a RACF in SA (referred to as 'prohibited categories'):

- > People who have arrived into SA from a restricted zone (including from overseas) in the past 14 days.
 - Up-to-date advice about travel restrictions is contained in the Cross Border Travel Direction: www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/emergency-declarations/cross-border-travel.
 - In the event of COVID-19 outbreaks interstate, people coming from restricted zones may be prohibited from visiting or have additional restrictions placed upon them when visiting a RACF in SA. For information on restricted and prohibited locations, visit www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/restrictions-and-responsibilities/travel-restrictions.
- > A person who has been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days (except in circumstances where appropriate PPE was worn).
- > A person with a fever (>38), or who has a history of fever or chills in the preceding 72 hours, or symptoms of acute respiratory infection, loss of taste and smell, or diarrhoea and vomiting.
- > A person who has undertaken a COVID-19 test and is awaiting a test result, unless this is in accordance with routine surveillance testing of asymptomatic persons.
- > A person who has not been vaccinated against 2021 seasonal influenza (from 1 June 2021).
- > A person who has worked or engaged at a medi-hotel site in the last 14 days as per the [Supervised Quarantine Direction](#).

Who can visit a RACF?

Providing they do not fall into any of the prohibited categories, the following people are permitted:

- > Employees, contractors, students and volunteers of the RACF.
- > People providing care and support to a resident, including family members and friends coming for a social visit.

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- > Prospective residents (and their support people).
- > People providing goods or services that are necessary for the effective operation of the RACF, or other professional services (e.g. hairdressers and advocates) at the facility.
- > People providing health, medical or pharmaceutical services to a resident.
- > People providing end of life support to a resident.
- > Legal practitioners who are providing legal advice or services.
- > Emergency management or law enforcement personnel, such as police, ambulance and fire services. In the event of an emergency, emergency service personnel may enter the facility regardless of any of the criteria listed in clause 5 of the Direction.
- > Officials undertaking regulatory functions, such as the officers from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission undertaking inspections.
- > People participating in a group activity led or supervised by an employee, contractor, student or volunteer of the facility.

Visits by family and friends

Currently, visits for the purpose of providing care and support to a resident (e.g. family and friends) are limited to a maximum of two visitors per day in RACF where less than 70% of residents have received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This may be two visits of one person each time, or one visit or two people together.

RACF with 70% or more of residents vaccinated against COVID-19 (with at least a first dose) are not impacted by these visitor restrictions. This includes social visits by relatives and friends (including children) and there are no restrictions on either the number of visitors a resident may receive or the duration visits.

Processes should be put in place to ensure that residents are able to receive visitors safely:

- > All visitors (other than a resident or a child under 12 years) must wear a mask (covering mouth and nose) at all times when in the physical presence of other persons. The requirement for a mask does not apply:
 - when the person is eating or drinking;
 - the wearing of a mask will hinder the provision of the relevant care and/or impact resident safety or wellbeing;
 - by a person who has a relevant medical condition, including problems with their breathing, a serious condition of the face, a disability or a mental health condition; or
 - in circumstances where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication, such as to enable communication by or with any person who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- > All visitors should be screened upon entry to the RACF to ensure they do not fall within any of the prohibited categories listed above.
- > Accurate records of all visitors must be kept by the RACF to assist with contact tracing, if required.
- > Visitors should adhere to physical distancing of 1.5m wherever possible, particularly in communal areas with other residents, staff and visitors.

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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.

- > Compassionate visits should be given to people in palliative care and those nearing end of life. Under the Direction, 'end of life' is defined as a person for whom death is imminent (likely within 2 weeks). Visits for the purpose of providing end of life support to a resident are permitted and numbers of visitors are not restricted in these circumstances.
- > Overseas/interstate visitors who travel from any place other than a low community transmission zone to provide end of life support to a resident are permitted to visit a RACF within 14 days of entering SA, provided they:
 - Have completed the [SAPOL Cross Border Travel Registration](#)
 - Have received written confirmation of a negative COVID-19 test
 - Wear appropriate PPE at all times while on the premises of the RACF
 - **Note:** Depending on the location, some travellers may also require written approval from SA Health for a compassionate exemption before submitting a Cross Border Travel Registration. See [Essential traveller health exemption](#) for specific information.
- > Visitors who are providing end of life support to a resident are permitted to visit if they have not yet received their flu vaccination, however, they must take all reasonable steps to get vaccinated as soon as practicable after their initial visit.

All requests for exemptions relating to exceptional circumstances must be made in writing to the Department for Health and Wellbeing via officeforageingwell@sa.gov.au.

- > Include contact details and any information relevant to the request, including the urgency of the situation.
- > Requests will be assessed by a prescribed authorised officer as soon as practicable and the requestor will be advised of the outcome.

Residents

COVID-19 vaccination for residents

COVID-19 vaccination for RACF residents is strongly encouraged but not mandatory. The Commonwealth Department of Health have undertaken in-reach vaccination clinics for residents of RACF nationally.

Residents who wish to be vaccinated and have missed the in-reach clinic, should be supported by the RACF to access a COVID-19 vaccine. This could include arranging a GP to administer vaccinations onsite or travel to one of the [South Australian vaccination sites](#).

For further information about COVID-19 vaccines in RACF, visit the Commonwealth Department of Health [website](#).

The operator of a RACF must, as far as is reasonably practicable, maintain a record of residents in the RACF who have received COVID-19 vaccinations. This must be made immediately available for inspection at the request of an authorised officer.

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Can a resident leave the RACF?

Residents are permitted to leave a RACF and then return, regardless of their reason for leaving.

- > Residents returning from hospital, another RACF or the community (home) do not require a routine COVID-19 negative test result.
- > All residents re-entering a RACF should undertake a [screening checklist](#) for COVID-19 upon their return. If they indicate 'yes' to any identified risk factors, appropriate strategies should be put in place to mitigate any risks to other residents.
- > Any resident who has been transferred to an ED from a RACF for assessment of acute respiratory symptoms OR fever where no other cause is found will be tested and cleared of COVID-19 prior to being discharged back to the RACF, if they had not been swabbed in the RACF prior to presentation.

Can a RACF still accept new residents?

Yes, RACF can still admit new residents. New residents entering a RACF either from hospital, another RACF or the community (home) are not required to undertake a routine COVID-19 test prior to being admitted.

All residents entering a RACF should undertake a [screening checklist](#) for COVID-19 upon admission. If they indicate 'yes' to any identified risk factors, appropriate strategies should be put in place to mitigate any risks to other residents.

What steps need to be taken if a resident is awaiting COVID-19 test results?

A resident who has undertaken a COVID-19 test is required to remain isolated in accordance with the directions of an authorised officer, until the result of the test is known.

A person providing care to a resident who is awaiting a COVID-19 test result is required to wear appropriate PPE, in accordance with the Australian Guidelines, when providing care to that resident until the result of the test is known.

Declared outbreaks in RACF: Self-quarantine period

A COVID-19 outbreak in a RACF is defined as a single confirmed case of COVID-19 detected in a resident, staff member or frequent attendee of the facility.

In the event of a COVID-19 outbreak, a prescribed authorised officer may declare a prescribed self-quarantine period in relation to the RACF, ending at the time declared by the prescribed authorised officer.

During a prescribed self-quarantine period, residents are prohibited from leaving the RACF, except in the following circumstances:

- > for urgent medical or dental treatment; or
- > for transfer to hospital; or
- > for transfer to another RACF determined to be suitable by an authorised officer; or
- > in order to self-quarantine at another location, including a family home, approved by an authorised officer.

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Note: *nothing in the Direction authorises the provision of treatment of a resident that is contrary to a relevant Advance Care Directive.*

If a resident is approved to leave the RACF to self-quarantine at a family home or other suitable location during a prescribed self-quarantine period, others residing at that location who are deemed close contacts will also be required to quarantine.

Anyone working at a RACF during an outbreak is prohibited from other employment for the duration of the prescribed self-quarantine period.

For more information

Office for Ageing Well
Department for Health and Wellbeing
SA Health, Government of South Australia
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

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