

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

SILC Operational Guidelines

Guidelines for House Operators and Support Workers

6 April 2020 (new information in red)

Q: What happens if I have travelled overseas recently or have holidays planned?

A: Returning travellers

From 11:59pm Saturday 28 March, **all international travellers** arriving in Australia regardless of nationality or point of departure must complete self-isolation for 14 days in designated facilities before they can go home or return to work. Self-isolation must happen in your city of arrival into Australia, no matter if you arrive by plane or cruise ship.

Domestic travel is also now deemed high risk, and if you travel interstate you will need to self-isolate in your home for 14 days before returning to work.

After you complete your 14 days' self-isolation, contact your House Operator or House Manager to seek advice on returning to work. Amardeep Sarkaria is SILC's designated Return to Work Officer.

A: Holidays planned

There is currently a travel ban in place for all Australians for both international and domestic travel. Fines apply for all international travel that is not deemed essential by the Australian Border Force if you choose to travel at this time. If you choose to travel interstate, each State and Territory has their own travel restrictions in place. SILC strongly recommends you cancel any upcoming holidays planned and abide by the current government guidelines. You can find more information on this here:

<https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/news-and-updates/coronavirus-covid-19>

Q: Do I get paid personal leave for shifts I would have worked during these 14 days?

A: If I'm a Permanent or PPT employee of SILC, I will be paid Not Required hours in accordance with IFA.

If these circumstances apply to you, you will be required to provide medical clearance from your GP before returning to work.

Q: What is the difference between 'casual' and 'close' contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case and what self-isolation requirements need to be followed?

Casual contact: A casual contact is someone who has been in the same general area as someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus while infectious. You are a casual contact if:

- You have had less than 15 minutes face-to-face contact in any setting with a confirmed case in the 24 hours period before the onset of their symptoms; or
- You have shared a closed space with a confirmed case for less than two hours in the 24 hours period before the onset of their symptoms.

Casual contacts **do not need to be excluded from work while well**. You must closely monitor your health and if you experience any symptoms you are advised to isolate yourself and contact your usual doctor by phone. Your doctor may require you to see him or her or liaise with public health authorities to care for you. Public health authorities may need to contact you for contact tracing purposes.

Close contact: A close contact is someone who has been face to face for at least 15 minutes, or been in the same closed space for at least 2 hours, as someone who has tested positive for the COVID-19 when that person was infectious.

An example of this in a SILC home is 15 minutes of personal care provided by an infected staff member or with an infected resident OR 2 hours in the same house as an infected person (resident, staff or other).

If you have been identified to have had close contact with someone who is confirmed to have infection with COVID-19 while they were infectious, you must:

- Isolate yourself at home until 14 days after you were last exposed to the infectious person. You should not leave the house, except for seeking medical care. You should stay in a different room to other people as much as possible, and wear a surgical mask when you are in the same room as another person and when seeking medical care. Use a separate bathroom if available. Do not go to work, school, or public areas, and do not use public transportation, taxi services or rideshares.
- watch for signs and symptoms:
 - fever
 - cough
 - shortness of breath
 - other early symptoms to watch for are chills, body aches, sore throat, headache and runny nose, muscle pain or diarrhoea

You can find more information here:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/novel-coronavirus-close-contact.aspx>
this page is also available in [Traditional Chinese](#) and [Simplified Chinese](#).

Q: What happens if a resident needs to be isolated?

A: In most cases, families will be able to accommodate the participant at the family home. Staff from the House Operator may be able to provide support at the family home. One resident can remain at the SIL Home and be supported by dedicated regular staff. The roster will need to be amended to avoid the same staff members working with different residents.

In cases where the resident cannot return to the family home, the House Operator can organise for the resident to stay in alternative accommodation such as a hotel, and staff can deliver services to the resident in the alternate accommodation and amend the roster to do so. SILC can provide support with isolation arrangements for residents.

Q: When is it appropriate for staff to be wearing PPE (personal protective equipment)?

The Department of Health and the NDIA both state that no staff or resident should be wearing PPE unless **there is a confirmed case or confirmed close contact of COVID-19** in the house with residents or staff.

Q: How do we source PPE for the house?

There is currently a national shortage of PPE. SILC is working with a few suppliers in Australia who have shipments of PPE coming into the country in the coming weeks. SILC is still encouraging Houses to source their own PPE. SILC will share the list of Australian PPE Suppliers on the Corporate Members' section of the SILC website. SILC will endeavour to obtain all houses with a small supply of PPE and to distribute more PPE to houses appropriately if there is a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Q: Are all staff required to receive the Influenza Vaccination

Health Authorities strongly recommend getting the influenza vaccination for 2020. This is to avoid people with the flu occupying hospital beds which might be needed for COVID-19 and because people that get both the common flu and COVID-19 face a much higher risk of getting very sick.

As such, SILC has agreed that the Temporary Advance Facility (COVID-19) can be used to pay for staff vaccination costs. In the first instance, House Operators should reimburse staff for the cost of their vaccination. On presentation of a receipt of the vaccination, with the payment request form, SILC will reimburse House Operators. Refer to Temporary Advance Facility (COVID-19) Operational Guidelines for more information.

Q: Does the house require professional cleaning/disinfecting when there is a confirmed case of COVID-19?

The house should be professionally cleaned/disinfected **immediately** after the infected person vacates. The World Health Organisation has estimated that COVID-19 can live on surfaces for up to 3 days, if all persons have vacated the house for longer than this there is a large decrease in possibility of infection via surfaces in the house. In this case, all surfaces can be regularly disinfected using household disinfecting products.

19 March 2020 Updates

Q. What training should House Support Workers do to prepare against the risk of infection to participants or themselves?

A: All SILC Staff should complete the Infection Control module on SILC's Learning hub immediately. It contains 37 slides with 7 short videos each with a short assessment.

It will take 20 – 25 minutes. It can be found on the Learning Hub under Learning Pathway 3 – Core Skills.

Q: What happens if there are school or day program closures?

A: The community participation provider may offer to deliver support in another setting. In this case, there would be no changes to the support provided in the SIL home environment. If this is not possible and families cannot provide informal support, SIL staff can be rostered to provide support during community participation hours.

In each participant's SIL quote, there are provisions for days when the participant is unable to attend their activities due to illness.

If you are using SILC staff to deliver community participation hours, please contact SILC Head Office immediately. This will allow us to make a service booking to ensure the funding is claimed from the Plan, and that House Operators are not left out of pocket.

We can also advise what steps you will need to take should a manual claim be required.

Q: What if a permanent employee wants to stay at home as a precaution?

A. Employees who want to stay at home (but are not directed to by their employer or as a result of a government order) need to come to an arrangement with their employer that best suits the business needs. Normal leave arrangements apply, and the employee may be requested to take sick leave or annual leave. If the employee does not enter into an arrangement with their employer or use paid leave, they are not entitled to be paid. More information can be found on the Fair Work website. Employees working in SIL Homes are not expected to be covered by JobKeeper arrangements.

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws#stay-home-precaution>

Q: What if a casual employee wants to stay at home as a precaution.

A. Casual employees who want to stay home are entitled to do so. They will, however, not be paid during this time as they are not entitled to leave provisions under the National Employment Standards.

Q: Where can I get up to date information from the NDIA?

A. The NDIA is monitoring the COVID-19 impact on people with disability. The NDIA have a frequently asked questions section with their latest response to the COVID-19.

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/ndis-and-other-government-services/ndis-and-disaster-response#faq>

16 March 2020 Updates

Q. What happens if a staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19?

A. If you develop any of the identified symptoms of coronavirus such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath you are to seek immediate medical attention.

You must not return to work until you have a medical certificate clearing you for work.

If you are permanent or PPT with personal leave available you can use it to be paid for shifts you would normally work during the period until you are permitted to return to work. If you have used all available personal leave, you can take paid annual leave.

Q. What happens if a staff member has been in close contact with a person confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 48 hours?

A. If you have been in close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 in the last 48 hours, you must immediately talk to the House Operator / House Manager and isolate yourself and work from home for 14 days. You will not be permitted to come back to work until you are declared medically fit and have provided a medical clearance certifying that you are free of COVID-19.

If you are permanent or PPT with personal leave available you can use it to be paid for shifts you would normally work during the period until you are permitted to return to work. If you have used all available personal leave, you can take paid annual leave.

Q. What happens if a staff member has been in casual contact with a person who has been exposed with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the last 48 hours?

A. If you have been in casual contact with a person who has been exposed to confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the last 48 hours, you must talk to the House Operator / House Manager and immediately isolate yourself. You will not be permitted to come back to work until you are declared medically fit and have provided a medical clearance certifying that you are free of COVID-19.

If you are permanent or PPT with personal leave available you can use it to be paid for shifts you would normally work during the period until you are permitted to return to work. If you have used all available personal leave, you can take paid annual leave.

Q. What happens if a staff member is returning back from overseas and is scheduled to return to work?

A. If you have a staff member who has been overseas and is scheduled to return to work, they will need to self-quarantine for 14 days as per Department of Health requirements for overseas returning travellers.

Q. What advice for people suspected to have COVID-19 Infection?

A. NSW Health has detailed advice for people suspected to have COVID-19 infection. Information can be found here.

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-suspected.aspx>

Q: What if a resident or relative is concerned about a resident who is coughing or sneezing?

A: We monitor the health and wellbeing of every resident in our care homes on a daily basis as part of our regular care delivery. During any outbreak, we practice hyper vigilance around infection control including hand hygiene, regular cleaning of touch points and as far as is possible social distancing.

If a resident presents with signs of respiratory or flu-like illness, regular precautions are put in place, which includes seeking the advice of a medical officer. Our team members cannot make any diagnoses. A medical officer would review the resident and based on that review, decide whether a COVID-19 test is necessary. Testing is done through the medical officer and the appropriate care arrangements would be put in place according to that advice. If hospitalisation is required, this would occur as per the regular process.

Q: What happens if we suspect a resident should be tested for COVID-19?

A: Seek a review from a qualified medical officer. Based on that review, the doctor will arrange. COVID-19 testing if deemed necessary. Testing is done through the medical officer.

Q: Do we have plans in place to ensure continuity of operational supplies?

A: SILC and House Operators are working together to ensure continuity of relevant operational supplies. This include:

Gloves

Hand sanitiser

Hand wash

Paper towels

Antibacterial wipes to wipe down surfaces

Q: What are we doing about large internal group meetings scheduled in SILC homes?

A: All large group meetings planned to take place in SILC homes are being conducted electronically. Anyone involved in scheduled meetings will be advised by the meeting organiser of any changes.

Q: What is the background of the current situation?

A: The World Health Organisation has declared novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a global health emergency. Striving to provide the safest possible place for our residents and team to live and work is core to our care. We ask that you to help us protect the safety and wellbeing of our residents and team by following the advice of the Commonwealth and State Departments of Health.

Q: What is coronavirus and COVID-19?

A: Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illness similar to the common cold and others can cause more serious diseases, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). This new coronavirus originated in Hubei Province, China and the disease outbreak is named COVID-19.

Q: What does self-isolate mean?

A: People who are recommended to be isolated should not attend public places, in particular work, school, childcare or aged care homes. Only people who usually live in the household should be in the home. Do not allow visitors into the home. Where possible, get others such as friends or family, who are not required to be isolated to get food or other necessities for you. If you must leave the home, such as to seek medical care, wear a surgical mask if you have one.

Q: How is coronavirus spread?

A: The coronavirus is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- direct close contact with a person while they are infectious
- close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes, or
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

Q: How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus

A: Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- and if unwell, avoid contact with others (touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact).

Q: What hand hygiene precautions should I take?

A: Hand hygiene is one of the strongest defences against coronavirus. We remind you of the critical importance of infection control procedures. Hand washing with soap and warm water, or alcohol based hand rubs, should be used to protect against infections. View the “Infection Control” video on the SILC Learning Hub

Q: What are the common symptoms of coronavirus?

A: According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), common signs of the infection include:

- Respiratory symptoms
- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath and breathing difficulties

Q: What if I have these symptoms?

A: Remain at home and contact your GP or local hospital for advice and speak with your House Manager or House Operator

If you have any further queries or concerns please contact your House Operator in the first instance.

Further Information

The World Health Organization has produced a short video and infographics to provide information on protecting yourself and others from getting sick.

The following link contains a useful video on basic protective measures.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>