For disability providers in the ACT

# First 24 hours: Steps to take in response to a positive COVID-19 diagnosis

**24 August 2021**

This document has been adapted from a document developed by SCOPE Australia for use in Victoria. It was made available for use and adaption by service providers.

NDS wishes to acknowledge and thank SCOPE for making this publicly available.

NDS has updated the document with the latest links and requirements for providers in the ACT.

Information and links are accurate as of 24 August 2021.

Providers are encouraged to regularly review updates on the ACT Government website.

0-30 minutes

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| Actions | Responsibility | Time |
| **Internal escalation**   * Escalate to senior management as required. |  |  |
| **Contact ACT Health**   * Confirm the case with ACT Health. ACT Health would normally notify the facility/ service provider directly of a confirmed COVID-19 case. * If you are concerned that a resident or staff member/visitor has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and the facility has not been notified, or that they may have COVID-19 and have not sought testing, contact Communicable Disease Control (CDC) on 02 5124 6209. |  |  |
| **Disability Accommodation Service Providers**   * Activate the facility’s plan to respond to a COVID-19 case.   **Isolate or relocation of individual**   * Isolate positive COVID-19 case and any residents who have symptoms of COVID-19 in single rooms (with own bathroom) that have been designated for isolation in your plan. Call ACT Health if isolation is not possible or these rooms are not available. If the case is a staff member or visitor, they should return home immediately. * Evaluate relocation of a positive COVID-19 case subject to:   + discussion with person responsible for health and accommodation decisions,   + service user and accommodation options   + organisation’s guidelines and risk management procedure.   **Individual’s needs/resources**   * Consider equipment and support needs e.g., manual handling, medication, behaviours of concern, therapy etc. * Determine what information is required for relocation if needed (hard copy customer files, computer access). * Exclude any staff from work who are close contacts or who have symptoms and ensure they are isolated at home. ACT Health will provide advice about getting tested.   **Other residents**   * Ask residents (including residents currently off-site) to return to their rooms. Any visitors and non-permanent residents (including Short Term Accommodation Residents) should be moved to a designated waiting area (where physical distancing can be observed) before being returned to their home (in collaboration with family members/informal supports). Ensure that anyone travelling goes directly home, preferably by private car. * Residents not returning home should remain in the facility in quarantine until advised by ACT Health that they can leave quarantine. If a single room with an en-suite is not available, call ACT Health for advice. Residents who are identified as close contacts by ACT Health will need to remain in quarantine for at least 14 days.   **Implement infection control measures**   * Ensure that you have read and understood the ACT Government [COVID-19 Guidance for Shared Accommodation](https://health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/COVID-19%20Guidance%20for%20Shared%20Accommodation%20-%20Version%202%20-%2010July2020.pdf). * Use [Personal Protective Equipment](https://health.act.gov.au/businesses/non-government-community-disability-and-health-service-providers#personalprotectiveequipment) (PPE) for all interactions with positive cases and their close contacts. PPE includes single use surgical masks, gloves, gowns and eye protection. Ensure that staff know how to [use PPE appropriately](https://health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/ACT-Health-PPE-Examples.pdf) when caring for clients who require direct care support. Allocate a staff member to supervise PPE donning and doffing. Ensure that staff know how [to don PPE](https://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-02/Donning%20and%20Doffing%20PPE%20for%20GPs_11022020.pdf) appropriately and [doff and dispose of used PPE safely.](https://health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/ACT-Health-Removing-PPE.pdf) * Reinforce the need to maintain standard precautions including hand hygiene, cough etiquette and staying 1.5m away from other people throughout the facility. * Organise lockdown of the facility. Place warning signs at entrances to the facility and on resident’s doors if required (ACT Health will provide signage if you don’t already have it). * Seek immediate assistance from the ACT Office for Disability if you are unable to deliver services safely and cannot provide alternative accommodation for residents to isolate. |  |  |
| **Other disability services**   * In non-housing settings, (e.g., day service) if service users are at the site, arrange for their transport home at the earliest opportunity. Send staff home to await further advice. Close the site and place a Notice of Closure at the entrance. |  |  |
| **Identify close contacts**   * Begin identifying and listing close contacts to provide to contact tracers. * Initiate internal notification of contacts as soon as possible. * For guidance, you can check the ACT Health website for advice on [types of contacts](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/quarantine-and-isolation/types-of-contacts#Close-contact). |  |  |

## 30-60 minutes

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| Actions | Responsibility | Time |
| **Convene the Outbreak Management Team**   * Roles should include responsibility for service management, human resources, OHS, communications, logistics and quality and safeguarding. Staff may need to perform multiple roles. * Nominate key contact(s) for the internal ACT Government lead. * Nominate key contact(s) for the site(s) affected. Depending on the size of the organisation, appoint a frontline team.  Ensure that the most senior member of the frontline team is also part of the Outbreak Management team. |  |  |
| **Activate Outbreak Management Plan**   * Revisit the plan and make any updates as required. * Provide copies of the updated plan and any other relevant information to all members of the Outbreak Management Team. |  |  |
| **Document all preventative and response measures**   * Maintain event logs to document any phone calls with the ACT Government, the NDIS Commission, the NDIA or other advisors, internal discussions, issues, phone calls, emails etc.  Ensure that all measures already in place are also documented. |  |  |
| **Confirm screening protocols**   * Stop all non-essential visits to the facility by restricting access. The facility, the Office for Disability and ACT Health work together to define essential visitors, including on a case-by-case basis. * Ensure that only essential staff have contact with the positive COVID-19 case. * Ensure QR code check-in requirements are completed for everyone entering the facility. |  |  |
| **Complete external notifications**   * Notify the Office for Disability, if they are not already aware: [officefordisability@act.gov.au](mailto:officefordisability@act.gov.au) Phone number: 02 6207 1086 * Registered NDIS providers are required to report to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission via completion of [Notification of event form](https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/providers/notice-changes-events/notification-covid-19). This form is used to notify any changes and events related to COVID-19. You will need information including NDIS Commission Registration ID, numbers of participants and staff affected, locations of service outlets and arrangements to ensure continuity of any critical supports. This notification must be made within 48 hours. |  |  |
| **Communications**  Call close contacts, and explain they need:   * to [quarantine](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/quarantine-and-isolation/quarantine) * get tested * to wait for further instructions from ACT Health. * Inform them that contact tracers will be in contact at the earliest opportunity. Encourage them to be honest and co-operative with contact tracers. |  |  |

## 1-3 hours

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| Actions | Responsibility | Time |
| **Communication**   * Release an initial communication once affected service users and staff have all been notified (or have had messages left for them).  Use a communication template that has been prepared earlier as part of the development of your outbreak management plan. * Ensure that the communication lists the status of the sites e.g. closed, operating or restricted. * Facilitate broader communication with staff, service users, families, and other stakeholders. This should include a communications methods suited to the service and accessibility needs (website, socials, release, text message, phone calls etc). * Assist ACT Health to assign a family liaison officer who will be available to support family members of residents and provide them with regular updates. * Establish a single point of contact for all media inquiries. * Appoint staff to take all incoming calls. This should **NOT** be a person on the frontline. * Develop key messages to assist those taking calls. |  |  |
| **Complete stocktake of essential supplies**   * Establish current stock levels of PPE and hand sanitiser to meet ongoing requirements for a minimum of 14 days for the people in the impacted facility or staff providing outreach support that is continuing to operate. * Liaise with ACT Health to ensure adequate access to PPE. * Disability providers and self-managed NDIS participants, where they cannot acquire the equipment they need through their usual channels, can request access to PPE from the National Medical Stockpile by contacting [NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au](mailto:NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au). * Requests for PPE can also be submitted through the ACT Government [PPE online request form](https://form.act.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=1542). * Review stock of required cleaning supplies and waste disposal needs. Refer to page 16 of the ACT Government [COVID-19 in Shared Accommodation Guidelines](https://health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/COVID-19%20Guidance%20for%20Shared%20Accommodation%20-%20Version%202%20-%2010July2020.pdf) for further information on cleaning. |  |  |

## 3-6 hours

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| Actions | Responsibility | Time |
| **Redeploy staff if required**   * Ensure there are sufficient staff numbers at sites affected to cover absences. Note that rostered staff may need to isolate or be unavailable. * Minimise staff movement across facilities. |  |  |
| **SIL and disability accommodation**   * Ensure there are sufficient staff numbers at sites affected to cover absences. Note that rostered staff may need to isolate or be unavailable. Minimise staff movement across facilities. * Use staff familiar to residents wherever possible and safe. * Contact the ACT Office for Disability for assistance if you are concerned about workforce supply. * The [NDIA can assist with surge capacity](https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/providers-coronavirus-covid-19) and workforce supply when all other avenues have been exhausted. This may include nursing assistance. |  |  |
| **Monitor the health of residents**   * Implement a system for regular symptom review of all residents. * If a resident shows any deterioration in health or starts to display [symptoms of COVID-19](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/symptoms-and-getting-tested/symptoms-of-covid-19) of an infection, immediately organise testing and follow the advice of ACT Health * Call 000 if the person deteriorates to the extent that they require transfer to hospital. Advise if the resident has a positive COVID-19 diagnosis or is an identified close contact. * You can contact the ACT Covid-19 helpline on 02 6207 7244 if you need advice. |  |  |
| **Arrange for testing of residents**   * Seek advice from the ACT COVID-19 helpline on whether testing of close contacts should be done inhouse or through a testing site. * [Testing locations](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/symptoms-and-getting-tested/where-to-get-tested-in-the-act) are available on the ACT Government website. * If residents/participants are unable to attend a testing site, call ACT Health on 5124 6500 between 8:30am and 6pm daily for advice. |  |  |

## 6-12 hours

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| Actions | Responsibility | Time |
| **Perform safe handovers**   * Identify staff members on each shift with responsibility for site induction and frontline infection control. * Ensure all handovers include updates on clinical and care needs. * Ensure that all new agency and surge workforce staff working at the site for the first time receive a thorough site induction as well as the briefing and orientation about how to support the person with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. |  |  |
| **Infection Control**   * Ensure disability workers and other essential workers, use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) correctly for all interactions with residents. * Ensure an outbreak coordinator with knowledge and experience in infection control can meet with staff at the beginning of each shift. * Ensure that all staff starting their shift receive a thorough briefing and orientation about how to support the person with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. This **MUST** include training on safe PPE usage and disposal (prior to shift starting). * Confirm that all staff have current [infection control training](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training). |  |  |
| **Cleaning**   * Seek guidance from ACT Health about deep cleaning of the facility. * Your organisation may be eligible to claim up to $300 per participant for [deep cleaning through the NDIS](https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/providers-coronavirus-covid-19). * Commence enhanced cleaning twice daily at a minimum. Clean frequently touched surfaces (including bedrails, bedside tables, light switches, handrails) more often. Refer to page 16 of the ACT Government [COVID-19 in Shared Accommodation Guidelines](https://health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/COVID-19%20Guidance%20for%20Shared%20Accommodation%20-%20Version%202%20-%2010July2020.pdf) for further information on cleaning. |  |  |
| **Review**   * Arrange an Outbreak Management Team briefing for the end of the day. * Review event logs and ensure all actions have been documented. * Document any key issues and actions that require attention. * Provide summary of Day 1 activities to senior managers and Board (if required). * Document key issues, actions required on Day 2 and any learnings. * Ensure 24hour Outbreak Management Team and backup contact details are available to all required. |  |  |

## 12-24 hours

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| Actions | Responsibility | Time |
| **Follow up communications**   * Review existing communications templates and adapt to update all external and internal communications. * Communicate with staff to advise them of all measures put in place to manage the outbreak. * Communicate regularly with residents and their families and consider any specific support services that may be needed. * Advise families that visits to the accommodation facility will be restricted. |  |  |
| **Support your staff**   * Ensure that staff have easy access to information regarding their Employee Assistance Program (EAP). * Ensure a monitoring roster of contact with all staff engaged in outbreak setting is in place to identify risks of fatigue, signs of ill-health etc. * Maintain a roster of contact with staff who are isolating or quarantining. * Investigate if there is [government financial support](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/community/access-help#Financial-and-other-support) for workers who have been instructed to self-isolate or to quarantine at home. |  |  |
| **Support resident/client mental health and wellbeing**   * Implement a system for regular monitoring of mental health of residents/clients. * Facilitate access to psychological services and resources for residents; ACT Health can help with this. * Ensure residents can talk to their caregivers or family over video or phone. * Ask ACT Health whether it is feasible for residents to access the outdoors while in quarantine or isolation. |  |  |