All Good Care

Protecting Older Australians: COVID-19 update 29 July 2020

Update on PPE and Masks

Face masks in community transmission regions: The Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments are requiring aged care workers in specific regions to wear masks for the delivery of residential or in-home aged care services.

This applies to all aged care workers and subcontractors of approved aged care providers. This includes staff delivering direct personal and clinical care as well as staff that provide other support services such as cleaning and catering.

The National Medical Stockpile is providing masks to aged care services in specific declared community transmission regions:

- Victoria – All residential and in-home aged care workers in Victoria, including declared areas of Greater Melbourne and Mitchell Shire
- NSW – All residential and in-home aged care workers in designated areas of Parramatta, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, Wingecarribee and Wollondilly.

Providers are now advised of additional steps to protect staff and residents working along the NSW/Victorian border. All staff who work in residential aged care facilities or deliver in-home aged care along the NSW/VIC border must wear a surgical mask (irrespective of where they live or have visited).

Travel and accommodation support for aged care workers

The Australian Government COVID-19 response has now been expanded to provide travel and accommodation support for aged care workers working in residential aged care facilities in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire. Support for eligible workers can include flights, accommodation and bus transfers from to/from the accommodation to the aged care facility they are working at.

Travel and accommodation support is available to increase the surge capacity of your workforce or to minimise the community contact of your current workforce. To access the arrangements you will need nominate a travel arranger who will be authorised to book travel or accommodation directly with the Australian Government's travel suppliers.

To register your staff as authorised travel arrangers please visit here or call 1800 318 207 for assistance. You will need to enter your National Approved Provider System ID. Once approved you will receive more detailed instructions on how to access the arrangements. Information on eligibility and details on how to access this service is available here.

Sonic testing – medical practitioner reminder

In the 11 June edition of this newsletter we provided information about a dedicated pathology service for rapid sample collection and testing for suspected cases of COVID-19 in residential aged care facilities (RACF), which is being delivered by Sonic Healthcare (Sonic).

In the event of an outbreak or suspected outbreak of COVID-19 in a residential aged care facility, the appointed state-based case manager from the Department of Health will work collaboratively with the residential aged care service to determine whether Sonic in-reach pathology will be required.In all cases the service must be requested by a medical practitioner as testing provided under this service will be bulk billed under Medicare.

We are aware of some circumstances where a medical practitioner nominated by the RACF is unaware of a request for this service. It is essential that when RACF are completing the information required by Sonic to undertake the tests, that nominated medical practitioners are aware of all residents and staff for which a request has been made under their provider number.

Reminder – Infection Control Training

Providers are reminded of the need to ensure aged care staff have completed the COVID-19 infection control online training that is available for health care workers in all settings. This training covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19.

Additional training modules, specifically designed for aged care workers are also available. The training can be accessed here. This includes a module on outbreak management, which takes approximately 8 minutes to complete, and by the end of the module participants will be able to:
- Identify what a COVID-19 outbreak is
- Demonstrate the appropriate infection prevention control measures for a COVID-19 outbreak
- Explain how to isolate and cohort residents during a COVID-19 outbreak
- Identify appropriate cleaning and waste disposal procedures during a COVID-19 outbreak.

If you would like to access the aged care training, users will need to register their workplaces as 'aged care'. If you have already registered for online training but not with 'aged care' as your workplace, email support@covid-19training.gov.au for a priority response. Additional resources on correct PPE use can also be found on the Department of Health's website, including a video of Alison McMillan, Australia's Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, demonstrating how to wear PPE for aged care workers.

Extended arrangements for accessing emergency

CHSP servicesAs part of the Department of Health's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the assessment and referral pathways for the CHSP were relaxed to enable older Australians to access emergency CHSP services for up to six weeks without an assessment. This was previously extended to 30 July 2020.

In light of the current situation in Victoria and New South Wales, the Department has decided to extend these arrangements through to 31 October 2020. During this period, access to CHSP service may be provided to older Australians without an aged-care assessment where there remains an urgent need.

CHSP providers who have delivered services to clients for an extended period without an aged care assessment due to COVID-19 should now be helping these clients to be assessed by a Regional Assessment Service if there is a likely need for ongoing CHSP services.

Registering clients with My Aged Care
It is a requirement that all clients in receipt of services are registered with My Aged Care, regardless of whether they have received an aged care assessment.For more information about eligibility for emergency access to CHSP services please see Section 4.4.1 of the CHSP Program Manual 2020-2022.