

## COVID-19 Update

### What you need to know:

- From 6pm yesterday, self-isolation requirements were updated for close or household contacts who are no longer required to isolate at home for 7 days.
- If a child or staff member has tested positive, they must isolate for 7 days and can leave isolation after 7 days only if they are symptom-free. They do not need to test before returning to the service.
- All positive COVID test results must continue to be reported to [Service NSW](#) and the service.
- Mandatory double vaccination requirements for staff and volunteers will no longer be in place from 13 May.

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### A message from Sarah Mitchell Minister for Education and Early Learning

Dear services and providers

This week, the NSW Government announced changes that will impact on the way that we respond to cases of COVID-19 in the community including in our Early Childhood Education and Care community.

For the past two years, I know that services have been working hard to keep our children safe and I thank you all for your tireless work. With the high rates

of vaccination in our community and the Omicron peak behind us, NSW Health has advised that we are able to make these changes safely and in a measured way.

This will provide much-needed immediate relief for our ECEC workforce who have been hit hard by shortages due to isolation requirements.

The NSW Government will support your ongoing response by issuing additional supplies of Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits for service staff in the coming weeks. As we approach winter, I encourage you to continue to consider your COVID-smart practices to ensure those in your service stay safe and well.

With best wishes

Sarah Mitchell

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## **Change to isolation requirements for close contacts**

The announcement to ease the isolation requirements for close contacts will enable staff and children who are close contacts and have no symptoms to continue to attend services if they follow the [NSW Health close contact guidelines](#).

While you do not have to self-isolate, impacted children and staff may only return to work or school/education facility after you have notified that you are a household contact or a close contact. Your employer or educational facility must approve your return to work/school/ECEC and may ask you to take additional precautions to reduce the risk of transmission.

Services may encourage staff to use this option to support workforce needs; however, those who are caring for a family member or who are unwell or showing COVID-19 symptoms themselves should continue to isolate at home.

There are no changes for positive cases: the seven-day isolation requirement remains in place for anyone who has recorded a positive RAT or PCR result. Those people who test positive must follow NSW Health's [Testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#) guidelines.

## Vaccination requirements

The current Public Health Order (PHO) requiring vaccine mandates for Education and Care Workers applies until it is repealed by the NSW Government on 13 May. In line with the broader community settings, organisations may choose to move to a risk-based assessment approach for the workforce after this time, meaning that services may choose to implement policies around vaccination.

## New Rapid Antigen Supplies

We will commence distribution of another round of RAT kits from next week for the use of staff in services. Delivery will take up to three weeks. This will support services to respond to emerging cases of COVID-19 should they arise in your service.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the new close contact guidelines?

From 6pm today, [close contacts \(defined as a household contact or an individual](#)

[deemed by NSW Health to be a close contact](#)) will not have to isolate, as long as they have no symptoms and comply with the following guidelines:

- If you have or develop symptoms, you must self-isolate and get tested for COVID-19. If your test result is positive, you must follow the [testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#) advice. If your test result is negative, stay home until you do not have any symptoms.
- **Do not visit** aged care, hospitals, disability, and correctional facilities unless a special exemption applies;
- Work or study from home where practicable. You must seek approval from your employer or education facility before returning to work or school/ECEC if you cannot work or study from home. Your employer will undertake a risk assessment before you can return to the workplace or education setting.
- Wear a face mask in indoor settings outside the home if you are over 12 years of age;
- Undertake daily RAT tests before coming into close contact with people outside their household, where practicable;
- Avoid contact with elderly and immunocompromised persons where possible;
- Notify their employer/educational facility that they are a close contact, and that they are not required to isolate as long as they comply with the above.

Close contacts will need to comply with the above guidelines for 7 days from the time a person in their household tested positive for COVID-19.

This applies to all children, educators, staff and visitors who attend your service. For more information refer to [NSW Health close contact guidelines](#).

### **What if a young child is a household or close contact? What do the new rules mean?**

The new rules apply to both children and adults, however, masks are not

mandatory for under 12s and RATs are not mandated for anyone including children, however daily testing is recommended if coming into contact with close contacts outside of their household.

Tests for children should always be done or supervised by an adult. Some kits cannot be used on young children and babies. Please carefully follow any instructions provided with the test kit if using the test on a child or baby. Read the [COVID-19 advice for parents](#), students and children.

**Do children need to attend ECEC wearing a mask if they are a household contact?**

If you are a household contact over 12 years of age, you must wear a mask when you are in an indoor setting that is not your own home.

In accordance with current NSW Health advice, masks should not be worn by children under 2 years of age. NSW Health advises children 2-12 years are also exempt from the requirement to wear face masks but are encouraged to wear masks indoors where practicable.

**Do families need to notify their service if their child is a close or household contact?**

Household contacts should notify their educational facility per the updated requirements, ahead of returning to the service. Services are able to implement their own service policies to determine the conditions of accepting a child or staff member who is a household contact, and are encouraged to consider [NSW Health advice](#).

**What advice should be provided to families with children who have additional needs and/or immunocompromised conditions?**

Services are encouraged to advise families to keep their children home if they are concerned. Household contacts returning to educational facilities is at the discretion of the service [per the NSW Health guidelines](#).

Services are encouraged to maintain their COVID-smart measures, which are outlined in this email. You may also consider practices relevant to your service context.

**Do Family Day Care services still have to close if a household member is COVID positive?**

Yes. If a person in the household is [a positive case of COVID-19](#), no children or adults not normally residing there should attend the premises. If you are self-isolating you cannot have any visitors in your home, unless they are providing healthcare, emergency maintenance or emergency services.

**Do services need to sight a negative RAT before a household contact attends a service?**

No, services are not legally obliged to sight a negative RAT prior to a child attending the service.

**If a person has already been a positive case, do they need to follow the updated guidelines?**

If a person has been a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 12 weeks, they do not need to comply with new close contact requirements.

**What requirements are in place for household contacts attending schools/OSHC services?**

The same guidelines as set out by NSW Health apply in OSHC services. For NSW Public Schools, you can visit [our schools page for more information](#). OSHC providers are also encouraged to speak with their school principal to confirm arrangements at their school.

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## **Maintaining COVID-smart measures**

Services are encouraged to maintain COVID-smart measures to help slow the spread of COVID-19. These practices will also help to keep you safe and well throughout the winter months. These measures will continue to be reviewed and updated as necessary, based on health advice.

Services are encouraged to put in place additional COVID-smart practices if they are experiencing a large increase in case numbers to minimise disruption. These include:

- Encourage your staff to have the flu vaccination to keep safe throughout winter. Encourage families too - young children are eligible from 6 months of age. Please see [NSW Health advice on flu vaccination](#).
- Children and staff should take a rapid antigen test immediately if they have symptoms and not attend the ECE service until they are well, even if their RAT is negative. Children under two are able to attend testing clinics for a PCR test.
- Staying 1.5 metres away from other people where possible and avoid crowding children together.
- NSW Health continues to recommend the wearing of masks indoors for adults when you cannot physically distance, and this is a decision for services and educators to determine.
- Staff and visitors in ECE services should continue to be supported to wear a mask should they choose to do so.
- Getting together outdoors or in large, well-ventilated spaces with open doors and windows.
- Services are encouraged to remind staff, children and visitors to practice simple hygiene by washing hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds- you should not rely on hand sanitiser only. View the [NSW Health hand washing poster](#) for more information.

- Get vaccinated as soon as you can. All family members and staff should get a booster COVID-19 dose as soon as they are eligible. All children aged 5-11 are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Individual services should continue to evaluate what is most appropriate for their service and their unique circumstances. For example, staggered drop-off or pick-up times, or collecting children from outside the service.

Please remain vigilant by continuing to follow the [COVID-safety guidelines](#) to help keep children, educators and the community safe.

## For more information

ECEC staff are encouraged to regularly check the [NSW Health website](#) and [NSW Government website](#) regarding up-to-date restrictions in NSW.

If you have any questions about your service operation you can contact the Information and Enquiries team on 1800 619 113 or by emailing [ececd@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:ececd@det.nsw.edu.au).

If you have specific questions about COVID-19, you can also email [ECEC.COVIDCASE@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:ECEC.COVIDCASE@det.nsw.edu.au).





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