



21 December 2021

COVID-19 Update

What you need to know:

- The NSW Government announced changes to close contact isolation requirements reducing this from 14 days to a [7 day isolation period](#). This now applies to early childhood education and settings.
- If there is a positive case in your service, all staff, children and visitors who were in attendance 48 hours prior to the positive COVID-19 swab (PCR test) will be deemed a close contact.
- New resources are available to help services notify impacted families and staff who were in attendance of their testing and isolation requirements.

Dear services and providers

COVID-19 continues to present risks with transmission in early childhood education and care services, in particular with the new Omicron strain.

A reminder that all early childhood education and care service staff **must be vaccinated. The PHO requiring this has been extended.**

Services should also continue to follow [COVID-safe guidelines](#) to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the community and sure ensure they incorporate the changes below into their plans.

NSW Health [has provided information for ECE services](#) to support your response.

Changes to close contact isolation requirements

NSW Health have updated their advice regarding [close contacts of COVID-19](#).

If you have been told you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19:

- self-isolate for 7 days from the last date of potential exposure
- get a nose and throat (PCR) test at a [testing clinic](#) straight away and again on day 6
- you can leave self-isolation after 7 days if your test on day 6 is negative, you feel well and you have had no further contact with a COVID-19 positive person.

There is ongoing risk following this 7 day self-isolation period, and so it is recommended that you get a nose and throat (PCR) test again on day 12.

You should avoid high risk settings (health care, aged care, correctional facilities) where possible, and take extra precautions around vulnerable people including family members, for another week.

NSW Health is currently processing any confirmed ECE close contacts to revise messaging, ensuring the change in isolation requirements is communicated to those impacted.

Positive cases in a service

If there is a positive case in your service, all staff, children and visitors who were in attendance (indoors for more than 15 mins) in the 48 hours prior to the positive COVID-19 swab (PCR test) will be deemed a close contact.

All close contacts in an early childhood education and care context will be required to isolate and seek a PCR test immediately.

[Please follow the steps in this process flowchart](#) when you have been notified of a positive case in your service – in summary these steps are:

- Make a notification via [NQA ITS](#): I01 Notification of health incident – health emergency
- Determine the infectious period (48 hours prior to the positive PCR test OR onset of symptoms, whichever is the earlier date)
- Determine who was in attendance at the time of the positive case for more than 15 minutes
- Contact all staff and families in attendance and advise them they are a close contact – use the [close contact letter for families here](#) to advise that they need to [undertake PCR test and isolate for 7 days](#)
- Organise cleaning of your service

You can contact the NSW Department of Education's Information and Enquiries line on 1800 619 113 for further advice if required.

The line is available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

If you need to contact the department's COVID support team outside of business hours, you can contact us by email at ecec.covidcase@det.nsw.edu.au.

Please ensure you include your service name and best contact number.

Being prepared for a positive case is the best way to manage it quickly

The best way to deal with a positive case when it happens is to be as prepared as possible before it happens.

Please ensure you do the following to be prepared:

- Ensure daily attendance records for staff, children and visitors are up to date – you will need this if you need to determine who was present at the time a positive case was at the service
- Ensure that phone numbers and email addresses for all staff and families are up to date as you will need to contact them all quickly if you have a positive
- Ensure you have visited our webpage on [positive case management](#) and that you have downloaded the [process flowchart](#) and have it handy to follow the steps required
- [Download the family letter](#) and have it ready to send when needed

RAHT Test to Stay program

We're working with NSW Health to determine the use of Rapid Antigen Home Testing in ECE and will provide advice when available.

For more information

Our [website continues to be updated](#) with information and frequently asked questions about vaccination requirements.

We encourage staff to review our [COVID-19 guidelines for ECEC services webpage](#) regularly, and to access our [sector updates](#).

Educators 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.



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