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Policy 3.21

## Child Care Services Taree & Districts Inc.

## Covid Response Plan

This policy will be updated as required to ensure the protective measures against COVID-19 as advised by NSW Government.

**The Purpose of the Policy:**

The purpose of this policy is to provide an overview of the organisational response plan to be implemented when there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID in our service. Our Service will minimise our Participant's exposure to COVID by adhering to all recommended guidelines from the NSW Government- Department of Health and local Public Health Units to manage the spread of the virus and maintain practices that help to reduce the transmission of the virus. Our Service will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures.

Our Service will provide up-to-date information and advice to staff, participants, parents, families and support workers sourced from the NSW Government, Department of Health and state Ministry of Health about COVID as it becomes available. Recommendations and health measures mandated by the Health Department will be strictly adhered to at all times.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to participants, children, families, staff, support workers, management, and visitors of the Service.

**Accessing Information about Covid**

It is important to access information about COVID from Reputable sources such as:

National Coronavirus (COVID) Health Information Line – **1800020080**
(Call **131450** for translating and interpreting services)
Health Direct – **1800022222**
**Service NSW - 137788**
Public Health Unit- Local state and territory health departments

**Basic Facts About COVID**

Based on our current information, the key characteristics of the disease are:

| Symptoms | Fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, and shortness of breath |
|---|---|
| **Spread** | The virus can spread from person to person through close contact with an infectious person, contact with their droplets from a cough or sneeze, or contact with surfaces (e.g. doorknobs or tables) contaminated by droplets. |
| **Prevention** | Everyone should practise good hygiene to protect against infections. Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser. Use a tissue and cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Avoid close contact with others. |
| **Diagnosis** | If you become unwell use a Rapid Antigen Test if positive you are required to report your positive test to Services NSW.  If you need to seek urgent medical attention call ahead of time to book an appointment and tell your doctor your symptoms or if you have been in close contact with someone who has been ill or have travelled recently. |

| Treatment | There is no specific treatment for COVID, but medical care can help with the symptoms. |
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| Vaccination | Vaccination is available through Vaccination Centres, chemist and your local Dr. All staff and support workers who have direct face to face contact with participants are required under NDIS Standards to be double Vaccinated Booster shots are now available and recommended for staff workers, participants and their families. Participants will be encouraged and supported to attend vaccination clinic and GP's to obtain their vaccinations. |

COVID is a strain of coronavirus that was originally identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO), has declared that COVID-19 outbreak as a 'pandemic'- a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (effective 11 March 2020). This is mainly due to the speed and scale of transmission of the virus in countries around the world, including Australia.

COVID  is transmitted from someone who is infected with the virus to others in close contact through contaminated droplets spread by coughing or sneezing or by contact with contaminated hands or surfaces. According to Department of Health, the time of exposure to the virus and when symptoms first occur is anywhere from 2-14 days.
Symptoms can range from a mild illness, similar to a cold or flu, to pneumonia. People with COVID may experience:
o fever
o cough
o shortness of breath
o sore throat
o Headache
o loss of smell
o loss of taste
o runny nose,
o muscle pain
o joint pain
o diarrhoea
o nausea/vomiting
o loss of appetite.


The Australian Government is constantly updating the current status of COVID including health recommendations, travel restrictions, and a vast collection of resources and information to help people make informed decisions.
As information is changing rapidly, our Service is constantly monitoring health alerts and implementing measures suggested by key health experts to minimise the transmission of COVID.
Our duty of care and responsibilities to participants, children, parents, families, support workers and all staff to provide a safe environment is of utmost importance.


The evolving nature of COVID and the unprecedented steps required to protect our community as recommended by the Australian Government, has resulted in the development of a specific policy to assist our Service manage this pandemic.


**Infection Prevention and Control**

People potentially harbour infectious microorganisms. As such, it must be assumed that all blood and body fluids/substances are potentially infectious. Standard precautions are the work practices required to achieve a basic level of infection prevention and control. The use of standard precautions aims to minimise, and where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection. Standard precautions should be applied in all person to person contact regardless of a person's diagnosis or presumed infection status.

Standard precautions must be used in the handling of:

- blood (including dried blood).
- all other body fluids/substances (except sweat), regardless of whether they contain visible blood.
- non-intact skin.
- mucous membranes.

Standard precautions consist of the following practices:
- if you are unwell stay home
- wearing an approved facial mask during supports if the participant is unwell and in areas where you are not able to effectively maintain recommended distancing
- hand hygiene before and after all contact.
- the use of personal protective equipment, which may include gloves, gowns, plastic aprons, masks, face shields and eye protection.
- the safe use and disposal of sharps.
- routine environmental cleaning.
- waste management.
- respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
- appropriate handling of linen.


**Hand Hygiene**



Hand hygiene is considered one of the most important infection control measures for reducing the spread of infection. Hand hygiene is a general term that refers to any action of hand cleansing with:

- alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) in either liquid, foam or gel form.
- antiseptic liquid hand wash and running water.
- (plain) liquid soap and running water and dry with single use towels.

Hands should be washed with soap and water regularly, if unable to access hand washing then regularly apply hand sanistiser.

Hand hygiene should also be performed:

- upon entering and leaving the workplace.
- immediately before and after glove use.
- before and after contact with a participant
- before handling sterile products/packs.
- before and after eating.
- before handling PWS food.
- after coughing or sneezing or blowing nose.
- after cleaning including the participant's equipment and belongings.
- after contact with animals (including companion therapy).
- before and after smoking, including e-cigarettes.

Hand hygiene should be undertaken regularly and performed thoroughly for at least 20 seconds, in accordance with the guidance provided in the following NSW Government

Health posters. These posters are also accessible via the links provided below:

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pandemic/Publications/hand-wash-community.pdf

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pandemic/Publications/hand-rub.pdf

**Respiratory Etiquette**

Cough and sneeze etiquette refers to simple hygiene practices everybody can take to prevent passing on respiratory infections like cold and flu to other people. It is especially important that people who are sick with respiratory infections practise good cough and sneeze etiquette. When someone with a respiratory infection coughs or sneezes, they release respiratory droplets. These droplets contain virus particles that can cause infection if they enter another person's respiratory tract (e.g. when they come into contact with their nose). The droplets released during coughing and sneezing may be inhaled, or they may land on a person's hands or hard surfaces where the virus particles can survive for hours.

If a person touches contaminated surfaces, the virus particles may be transferred to their hands. If a person touches their face with contaminated hands, it may cause infection. However, because respiratory infections can be transmitted even before symptoms like sore throat and cough are evident, it's important to wear a protective facial mask and practise proper cough and sneeze etiquette regardless of the circumstances.

This includes doing and instructing other to do the following:

Wearing a recommended facial mask

- cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing
- preferably using tissues to contain respiratory secretions. If there are no tissues available coughing/sneezing into the elbow can prevent hands from becoming infected. If the cough or sneeze was directed onto a hard surface like a desk or telephone, clean it immediately as per the cleaning surfaces information provided before.
- dispose of tissues used to contain a cough or sneeze in the nearest waste receptacle immediately after use. If there is no bin, use a plastic bag to store contaminated tissues until a bin is available.

- practice hand hygiene afterwards as per the information provided before.
- avoid touching your face with your hands.
- avoid close contact with other where possible (minimum of 1.5 m distance between people).

The following NSW Government Health Cough Etiquette can be accessed via this link:

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pandemic/Publications/cough-etiquette.pdf
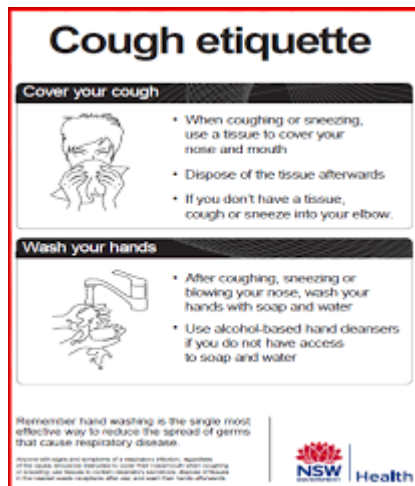


**Personal Protective Equipment**

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can protect people from exposure to blood and body fluids/substances. PPE that complies with relevant Australian Standards should be used in accordance with the following guidelines:

I. Gloves
- The use of gloves should not be considered an alternative to performing hand hygiene. Hand hygiene is required before putting on gloves and immediately after removal.
- Wear gloves (single-use non-sterile) when there is the potential for contact with blood, body fluids/substances, mucous membranes or non-intact skin.
- Change gloves between different tasks that require gloves especially those that involve contact with the PWS.
- Change gloves between personal care activities for each PWS.
- Gloves used for personal care activities are to be single use only.

II. Gowns and aprons

- Wear an apron or gown to protect skin and prevent soiling of clothing during procedures and participant care activities that are likely to generate splashing or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions, or cause soiling of clothing.
- Once the task requiring the gown is completed, remove the used gown as promptly as possible and roll it up carefully and discard appropriately as per the waste management guidelines provided below.
- Perform hand hygiene immediately after removal.

III. Masks - Wear an approved mask to protect the nose and mouth during tasks that require them including participant care activities and cleaning procedures that are likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions and excretions.

- In the majority of situations where standard respiratory protection is needed, a single use surgical mask is appropriate.
- A mask needs to be 'fit checked' at the time of use to ensure the user has achieved the required seal in real time.
 - Masks should be changed between tasks and PWS care activities AND when they become soiled or wet.
- Masks should never be reapplied after they have been removed.
- Masks should not be left dangling around the neck.
- Touching the front of the mask while wearing it should be avoided.
- Remove the mask by holding the ties only and dispose of the mask into a waste bin.
- Hand hygiene should be performed upon touching a used mask.
- Perform hand hygiene immediately after removal of a mask.


IV. Eye protection and face shields

- Wear eye protection or a face shield to protect the eyes, nose and mouth during tasks that require them including PWS care activities and cleaning procedures that are likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions and excretions.
- Eye protection and face shields can be sanitised but should only ever be individual use (i.e. not shared between individuals). Reusable eye protection and face shields should be washed with detergent and water between uses. Visible contamination with faeces or vomit should first be washed off with soap and water, followed by cleaning with bleach solution (see following section Disinfecting with bleach).
- Perform hand hygiene immediately after removal.


V. Fitting and removing PPE In order for PPE to protect from exposure to blood and body fluids/substances, it must be fitted (also called don/donning) and removed correctly as per the following guidelines:
- Don PPE before commencement of the task it is needed for.
- Prior to donning the PPE remove all personal items including jewellery, watches, phones etc
- Don and remove PPE as per the recommended sequence and removal method provided in the following posters, and accessible via the links provided below:
https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/6C98191BEBE4B05ECA257E350

07F6926/$File/correct_order.pdf

https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/PPE-Sequence.pdf


**Routine Environmental Cleaning**

Cleaning is important for infection control because deposits of dust, soil and microbes on surfaces can transmit infection. The following basic principles should be followed:
I. General Principles
- standard precautions (including wearing of PPE, as applicable) should be implemented when cleaning.
- cleaning methods should avoid generation of aerosols.
- single-use cleaning items are preferred, where possible, such as lint-free cleaning cloths. If this is not possible then all cleaning items should be changed after each use and cleaned and dried before being used again.
- any cleaning item used in the cleaning of blood or body fluid/substance spills should also be changed immediately.

- detergents should not be mixed with other chemicals.
- all cleaning solutions should be prepared fresh before use.


II. Surface Cleaning

- ensure sprays and cleaning agents touch all parts of the surface to be cleaned.
- floors in non-office type workplaces should be cleaned as necessary.
- brooms should not be used indoors as they disperse dust and bacteria into the air.
- food preparation surfaces should be cleaned (wiped over) with a neutral detergent and warm water solution, rinsed and dried before and after each use when possible.

- toilets, sinks, washbasins, baths and shower cubicles (including all fittings attached and surrounding floor and wall areas) should be cleaned regularly.
- other work surfaces should be cleaned daily or when visibly soiled
- spills should be cleaned up as soon as practical
- when a disinfectant is required for surface cleaning, the manufacturer's recommendations for use should be followed.
- buckets should be emptied after use, washed with detergent and warm water, rinsed in hot water and stored dry (turned upside down).
- mops should be laundered or cleaned in detergent and warm water, rinsed in hot water, then stored dry.


**How long does COVID last on surfaces?**

According to the World Health Organization, it is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with a common household disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.


**III. Disinfecting with bleach**

- When bleach is required for disinfection, use freshly-made bleach solution and follow manufacturer's instructions for appropriate dilution to achieve a 1000ppm (0.1%) bleach solution.
- When making up a bleach solution ensure gloves and protective eye wear is worn.
- Bleach should be used mainly on hard, non-porous surfaces.
- Bleach can damage textiles and are corrosive to metals.
- A minimum of 10minutes of contact time with bleach is recommended for most viruses.


**Infection Control Training**

Support Workers attend online training in regards to Infection Control for COVID.


**General COVID Precautions**

- Avoid close contact with people unwell with cold or flu-like symptoms  NB: in accordance with advice from NSW Health that healthcare workers and other contacts who have taken recommended

infection control precautions, including the use of full PPE, while caring for a symptomatic confirmed COVID case are not considered to be in close contact.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid touching others unless observing the relevant standard precautions of infections prevention and control. This includes shaking hands with others, hugging or kissing other people.
- Avoid visiting vulnerable people, such as those in aged care facilities or hospitals, infants, or people with compromised immune systems due to illness or medical treatment.
- Try to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres from others as much as possible and avoid crowded places (known as social distancing).

For more information regarding social distancing click on the following link:

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/social-distancing.aspx

- For more information regarding how to protect yourself from COVID-19 click on the following link:

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/protect-yourself.aspx

**Responding & Reporting a Suspected or Confirmed Case**
In the event of anyone in our service coming in contact with or are confirmed to have COVID the operation of the service will continue as normal as possible.

In the event that a staff member, child, family member, educator, NDIS participant or support worker has been in contact with, or suspects they have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID daily monitoring and RAT testing is advised, all positive cases must be reported to Services NSW.

Each situation will be assessed on an individual basis. If possible and allowable care will be sought for any family requiring alternate care.

Staff will be required to isolate themselves and their family for the required period set by the Public Health Unit.
Staff will be asked to work from home **if they are in a position to do so**. Arrangements will be made so that staff are able to access relevant software, communication will be conducted via phone and emails.

In the event that a Support Worker reports a positive diagnosis for COVID the following steps must be taken:
1. Immediately escalate the report to Service Manager
2. Confirm the person has all the medical help they require.
3. Confirm the person is currently in isolation.
4. Record the date that the person tested positive or displayed COVID symptoms.
5. Record if the person had been at work 7 days prior to experiencing COVID symptoms and anytime afterwards.
5. Record all services/workplaces the person attended AND the people they interacted with (including duration of time spend with individuals).

There will then be a coordinated response to contact all known contacts of the Support Worker that were associated with the service so that they can monitor their health for any symptoms.
 Fact Sheet: Advice for people confirmed to have COVID infection

- accessible via the following links:
https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19
https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/symptoms-and-testing


**Managing a Confirmed COVID-19 Diagnosis –Participant Related**

In the event that a participant at Wattle Tree Care reports a positive diagnosis for COVID the following steps must be taken:
1. Confirm the person has all the medical help they require.
2. Confirm the person is currently in isolation.
3. Record the date that the person tested positive or experienced COVID symptoms.
4. Record if the person had been engaged in any of our services 7 days prior to experiencing COVID symptoms and anytime afterwards.
5. Record the people they interacted with (including duration of time spend with individuals).
6. Immediately escalate the report via:
Phone-call to the Service Manager as well as an Email containing the affected person's name and contact details, and the answers to the questions outlined above


If the COVID-19 confirmed participant had been engaged in any of our services 7 days prior to experiencing COVID symptoms and anytime afterwards, the following actions will be taken:

- contact all known contacts of the participant, that were associated with Wattle Tree Care service provision, so that they can monitor their health for symptoms as per the NSW Health guideline.
- Determine the impact of, and mitigation plans for, any required self-isolation of staff related close contacts of the COVID confirmed participant.
- Factors to consider include:
  ▪ Nature of the service provision (i.e. high dependency service versus support services) – can this service experience a temporary disruption or is continuity of service essential?
  ▪ Minimum staffing levels and flexibility of staffing options – is there sufficient staffing? can staff from other services
  ▪ Mode of service delivery – can alternative delivery modes (such as online/facetime sessions) be utilised to support the participant and/or allow staff in self-quarantine to continue to provide service?

The service provided should only proceed if it is critical for the health and wellbeing of the PWS and the following controls are implemented:
- No staff considered most at risk from COVID (and/or is residing with another person(s) considered most at risk) should be permitted to undertake the service.
- Any of the participant's support person(s) who is in isolation or unwell, should not be providing support.
- All persons that will be in attendance for the participant's home should wear a face mask.
- If staff are unable to maintain physical distancing of a minimum of 1.5m from the participant they must be wearing full PPE including gloves, gown, safety glasses and face mask.
- Staff must don and doff PPE in accordance with protocols.
- Staff must complete hand hygiene and encourage the participant (and any attending support persons or household members) to complete hand hygiene, in accordance with hand hygiene requirements outlined in this Response Plan
- Staff should not touch their face during the service.

- The number of people in the one room inside must be minimised to only the essential persons and should not exceed maximum occupancy guidelines (i.e. 1 person per 4sqm).
- The time spent indoors should not exceed 15minute intervals unless necessary.
- Endeavour to have good ventilation of indoor areas during the service.
- Staff should avoid touching surfaces where possible and if appropriate wipe down surfaces and equipment before and after use (pay particular attention to surfaces, door handles, taps and light switches) in accordance with protocols outlined within this Response Plan
- If transporting participant wipe down all surfaces before and after transportation.
**NB: All confirmed cases of COVID must be reported to Services NSW on 137788**

**Availability of PPE, Hygiene & Cleaning Products**

Required PPE should be made available immediately outside of the room of any participant with suspected or confirmed COVID. A bin to dispose of the PPE should also be available near the exit of the room (inside of the room) of any participant with suspected or confirmed COVID.
Implementation of Controls to Minimise the Spread of COVID in the home:
- Restrict the movements of and interactions with participant with a confirmed diagnosis and/or fever or respiratory symptoms through the following required controls (where possible to implement)
- Care for the participant with suspected or confirmed COVID in their room, with the door shut and windows open.
- Keep the number of different workers to a minimum.

**Additional Resources**
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx
https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-information
Local state and territory health departments
Safe Work Australia
**State and Territory specific and National information**
Australian Government Department of Health *Health Topics* Health Topics Coronavirus COVID-19
Australian Government Department of Health Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for travellers
https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training
Fair Work Ombudsman Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws (2020)
https://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws
National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services.*
*Public Health Act 2010*
*Public Health Amendment Act 2017*
Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria