

Fact sheet:

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Public Health Directions

Disability Accommodation Services Direction (No. 7)

(Version 6.0, 18 December 2020)

Key points

- The Queensland Public Health Direction – Disability Accommodation Services (No. 7) applies from 1:00am on 19 December 2020. This direction is available to view on the [Queensland Health website](#).
- Under the direction, the Chief Health Officer has issued a number of requirements and guidance to all operators of shared disability accommodation services with **four or more residents with disability** in Queensland.

Key changes affecting Queensland disability service providers

Requirements and guidance for all shared disability accommodation providers

The Queensland Chief Health Officer has issued guidance for all operators of shared disability accommodation services in Queensland.

A shared disability accommodation service is a service where:

- four or more people with disability reside with people who are not members of their family, and
- the residents share enclosed common living areas within the facility, whether inside or outside, and
- the residents are provided with disability supports within the facility.

An operator of a shared disability accommodation service should ensure physical distancing and risk mitigation measures are in place at a service to the extent practicable, including:

- providing appropriate signage that clearly states physical distancing and appropriate hygiene requirements must be followed in a facility,
- ensuring cleaning and sanitising of all surfaces, doors and high traffic areas in disability accommodation services,
- structuring staff rosters in a way which minimises staff movements between multiple care facilities wherever possible,
- requiring staff to use personal protective equipment in accordance with current health advice, where staff movements can't be avoided,

- providing additional hand sanitising stations for residents, employees, contractors and visitors to encourage use,
- putting in place procedures to closely monitor the health of all employees, with at least daily reporting or check-ins by supervisors,
- ensuring tables and seating in common areas of disability accommodation services should be managed to provide appropriate social distancing,
- ensure staff are trained and procedures in place to keep family and support people informed where a resident becomes unwell or there is a case identified in the accommodation service
- encouraging any person entering the facility to have an up to date vaccination against influenza, if the vaccination is available to the person, and
- encouraging residents to continue essential community access but exercise appropriate caution when accessing the community.

In addition, the operator of a shared disability accommodation service in Queensland must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a person does not enter or remain on the premise if the person has:

- returned from overseas in the last 14 days (unless they have been in a safe travel zone country), or
- visited a [COVID-19 hotspot](#) in the last 14 days, or since the start date identified for the COVID-19 hotspot, whichever is shorter, or
- had known contact with a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or
- a fever (37.5 degrees or higher), or
- symptoms consistent with COVID-19 when seeking to enter a shared disability accommodation service. Symptoms consistent with COVID-19 means fever or history of fever, symptoms of acute respiratory infection (cough, shortness of breath, sore throat), loss of smell, loss of taste, runny nose, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting or fatigue, or
- been tested for COVID-19 and they have not received their test result (unless they are awaiting the result of a COVID-19 test taken for a surveillance testing obligation and meet all other requirements under relevant Public Health Directions e.g. [COVID-19 Testing for Quarantine Facility Workers](#)).

The operator of a shared disability accommodation service must also collect and keep contact information about all visitors, including volunteers and contractors, for contact tracing purposes for a minimum of 30 days and a maximum of 56 days. Visitors include registered NDIS providers and other providers entering a service to provide disability support.

A person from a hotspot or an overseas arrival can enter a shared disability accommodation service for an end of life visit, if they have been given an exemption by the Chief Health Officer. This will allow for requests for end of life visits to be considered individually. A person given an exemption for an end of life visit must comply with the conditions of the exemption and shared disability accommodation services must take precautions to manage these visits, for example, ensuring the visitor is wearing appropriate PPE, escorting the person to and from the room, avoiding common areas and contact with other residents.

This direction:

- **Does not limit residents from leaving the service**
 - People residing in shared accommodation environments, particularly those with complex health conditions, are however encouraged to exercise caution when accessing the community.

- Essential community access should continue with appropriate physical distancing and good hygiene practices observed. For example, receiving or accessing health care, disability services, attending employment, obtaining food or other essential goods or services or accessing outdoor physical or recreational activity related to a person's physical or mental wellbeing, including to assist with providing behavioural support.
 - People with disability who have complex health conditions should exercise their judgment before leaving home. For example, consider having their support worker pick up groceries so they do not need to go to the shops, or asking for telehealth appointments rather than going to the doctor's clinic if appropriate to do so.
 - As is the case across Queensland, anyone residing in shared disability accommodation service should get tested and remain at home if they feel unwell.
- **Does not limit residents' ability to access any areas of the service to which they normally have access**
 - Residents may continue to access any areas of the disability accommodation service to which they normally have access, subject to a direction to self-quarantine or self-isolate in accordance with a public health direction.

The Chief Health Officer may grant a person an exemption from all or part of the Disability Accommodation Services Direction on the basis of exceptional circumstances. You can [apply for an exemption online](#).

Outbreak Planning and Preparedness

It is vital to plan how you would deal with a situation in which the NDIS participants you support and/or your workers were infected. You should ensure your workers have:

- Completed the NDIS Code of Conduct Worker Orientation Module
- Completed Department of Health infection control training, and
- Watched this video from the Department of Health on the use of PPE [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Wearing personal protective equipment for disability workers](#).

The [NDIS Commission information pack](#) for providers and workers brings together the guidance and advice issued during the COVID-19 pandemic to inform, educate and remind NDIS providers of the support available to help them meet their obligations to NDIS participants. This includes the use of PPE and planning for outbreaks.

Using PPE

It is important that service providers take appropriate steps to consider how they can minimise the risk of a person with disability becoming distressed as a result of the use of a mask or face shield and work proactively with the person with disability to support them prior to the use of the mask or shield where possible.

Queensland Health has issued [guidelines](#) on the use of PPE in shared disability accommodation settings.

The guideline outlines infection prevention and control recommendations and additional considerations around the use of face masks and people with disabilities. Guidance about escalating use of face masks in shared disability accommodation services is based on an assessment of risk of community transmission of COVID-19.

The guideline is provided as guidance generally for shared disability accommodation settings. It is intended to support PPE decision making and is to be read along with the Disability Accommodation Services Direction as is in effect at any specified time.

Accessing PPE

Disability providers should continue to access PPE through their usual channels where possible.

COVID-19 PPE portal

The [COVID-19 PPE portal](#), established by the Queensland Government, matches PPE buyers and suppliers.

NDIS providers

Individuals are responsible for providing their own masks when they enter a shared disability accommodation service under the Disability Accommodation Services Direction.

NDIS providers can directly claim the costs of PPE for workers from the NDIA. NDIS participants who rely on face-to-face supports and assistance with their daily living can claim the costs of PPE under their NDIS plan. Read the [details about claiming costs](#).

NDIS service providers that cannot access PPE through their usual processes, should contact the National Medical Stockpile by emailing NDISCOVIDPPE@health.qld.gov.au. [View additional information \(PDF\)](#).

Other providers that are unable to access PPE should contact 13HEALTH or the local Public Health Unit.

Rights of people with disability

The [Australian Human Rights Commission \(PDF\)](#) has produced guidelines on the rights of people with disability in health and disability care during COVID-19 to ensure human rights considerations inform decisions by workers when supporting people with disability.

Contacts and Information for NDIS providers

The [NDIS Commission's website](#) has updates, training, alerts and other resources.

Call: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines). The contact centre is open 9am to 4.30pm in the NT, 9.00am to 5.00pm in the ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, TAS and VIC Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

Email: contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au

Website: www.ndiscommission.gov.au