



Home visits by South Australian Government employees

Purpose and scope

This protocol outlines recommendations for home visits to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. This protocol is only applicable to South Australian Government employees **outside** of the health system (it does not apply to healthcare workers but is instead a reference for those who work in disability care, child protection, and so forth).

General information

Home visits should be replaced with alternative models of service delivery, like telephone or video-conference, as much as possible and without compromising the health and wellbeing of clients, their families, the community or the workforce.

This will help maintain the delivery of essential services to families and individuals while managing the risks to workers, clients and the community.

Doing so will:

- Help reduce COVID-19 infection and transmission rates by reducing face to face contact where possible
- Ensure continued delivery of essential services including in the context of workforce shortages or redirection of staff to other COVID-19 duties
- Prioritise access to essential services based on individuals' vulnerability and need
- Ensure that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is prioritised and used in accordance with current guidance

Limits have been placed on visits to vulnerable groups, including residential care facilities and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, given the heightened health risk of COVID-19 for these groups. Please refer to current SA Health instructions regarding visits to vulnerable groups.

Protocol for home visits

The following actions are recommended to move to an alternative service delivery model:

- Reduce face to face contact wherever possible, by replacing home visits and centre appointments with telephone or electronic service delivery;
- Prioritise essential face to face appointments only for at-risk or high-needs clients.

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- If you plan to undertake an essential visit:

1 Call ahead to identify if the client/the client's family is/are a confirmed, probable or suspected case of COVID-19. Refer to Definitions for more information. When calling please ask the following:

1. Have you or anyone in your household been to any locations identified by SA Health alerts as COVID risk zones?
2. Have you or anyone within your household returned from interstate or overseas within the last 14 days?
3. Have you or anyone else in the household been exposed to a person that has been recently diagnosed with COVID-19 or asked to self-quarantine in the last 14 days?
4. Are you or anyone within the household unwell with a fever, cold or other similar symptoms, including loss of taste or smell?

2a If the answer is **'yes'** to any questions 1 through to 3:

Please direct the client to the SA COVID-19 Website, particularly the contact tracing page that outlines the current exposure sites and contains the link to the online form. If the client suspects they have been to an exposure site they should follow the instruction on the website and complete the online form and Contact Tracers will follow up with any additional requirements.

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/conditions/infectious+diseases/covid-19/testing+and+tracing/contact+tracing/contact+tracing>

- It is recommended to postpone the home visit or deliver your service electronically
- if the face to face visit is deemed critical and unavoidable, a short home visit (less than 15 minutes) can be completed by an employee wearing a surgical mask and protective eyewear, and the visit is to be conducted outdoors

2b If the answer is **'yes'** only to:

- Question 4

Or if the answer is **'no'** to all questions:

You can undertake the home visit while wearing a surgical mask and it is preferable that you conduct the visit outside.

It is also recommended that protective eyewear is worn during all face-to-face home visits. Where protective eyewear is not available the physical distance should be increased, provided confidentiality can be maintained, to at least 2 metres.

No home visit is to be undertaken without staff wearing surgical masks

2c Please also carry surgical masks and offer them to clients to wear during all home visits.

3 During an essential home visit:

- minimise physical contact
 - maintain a minimum distance of 1.5 metres and ensure a density of no more than 1 person per 4 square metres where possible
 - restrict the duration to less than 15 minutes
 - **wear a surgical mask**
 - It is also recommended that protective eyewear is worn during all face-to-face home visits. Where protective eyewear is not available the physical distance should be increased, provided confidentiality can be maintained, to at least 2 metres.
 - practice universal precautions and infection control procedures; observe [general recommendations](#) on social distancing and hygiene
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Decisions about the need to conduct a short face to face home or centre visit (less than 15 minutes) is at service provider discretion in line with business continuity plans and general advice from health authorities.

It is recommended that priority access for essential appointments (via electronic and telephone consultations wherever possible) is given to:

4. Young infants and new parents at key ages and stages;
5. Aboriginal parents, infants and children;
6. Anyone with additional needs or complexity.

7. Essential Home Visits for child safety & protection related matters.

As stated above for essential home visits, similar principles apply with some variation:

- Surgical masks must be worn during all home visits
- It is also recommended that protective eyewear is worn during all face-to-face home visits. Where protective eyewear is not available the physical distance should be increased, provided confidentiality can be maintained, to at least 2 metres.
- It will not always be possible to restrict the visit duration to less than 15 minutes (i.e. initial assessments, intensive family intervention for children at high risk, removal of a child from a dangerous situation, home detention assessments).
- Extended visits should where possible be restricted to 30 minutes
- In these circumstances, upon arrival at the property, DCP/ DHS staff are required to ask the appropriate screening question with the adults at the property.
- The screening questions should be undertaken at the front door of the property, ensuring the 1.5 metre distance as prescribed by the social distancing protocols.
- Should an occupant at the home answer “yes” to any question, please direct the client to the SA COVID-19 Website, particularly the contact tracing page that outlines the current exposure sites and contains the link to the online form. If the client suspects they have been to an exposure site they should follow the instruction on the website and complete the online form and Contact Tracers will follow up with any additional requirements.
- <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/conditions/infectious+diseases/covid-19/testing+and+tracing/contact+tracing/contact+tracing>
- All efforts should be made to negotiate to undertake the investigation/home visit/home detention assessment in the open air outside of the home (back or front yard).

Homes visits should not be undertaken by workers with confirmed, probable or suspected COVID-19. Workers should be tested if any of the below apply:

- symptoms of COVID-19;
- close or casual contact in 14 days with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Definitions

Confirmed case

A person who tests positive for COVID-19 or has the virus identified by electron microscopy or viral culture.

Suspected case

A person who:

- Has had close or casual contact in 14 days before illness onset with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

AND

- Has a fever **OR** acute respiratory infection (like shortness of breath, cough) with or without fever.

Probable case

A person with:

- Fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$)¹ or history of fever (like night sweats, chills)

OR

- Acute respiratory infection (like a cough, shortness of breath, sore throat)

AND

- who is a household contact of a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, where testing has not been conducted.

Casual contact

Where a person has less than 15 minutes face-to-face contact with a symptomatic confirmed or probable case, or shared a closed space for less than two hours with a symptomatic confirmed or probable case.

Close contact

Where a person has *more than 15 minutes face-to-face contact* with a confirmed or probable case in the period extending from 24 hours before onset of symptoms; or *sharing of an enclosed space for more than 2 hours with a confirmed or probable case*, in the period extending from 24 hours before onset of symptoms.

This Protocol is subject to further updates. For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au or contact the National Coronavirus Information Hotline on 1800 020 080.

For COVID-19 advice and information for health and service providers refer to [this link](#).

Refer to [this link](#) for specific advice on social distancing and hygiene.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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