

COVID-19 Information for Accommodation Services Frequently Asked Questions for families

Updated as at Wednesday 18 March

What is happening in homes supported by the State Government's Accommodation Services?

Many changes are happening across our community because of the outbreak of Coronavirus, or COVID-19. The South Australian Government has declared the outbreak a State Health Emergency.

In line with expert advice, Accommodation Services is taking steps to help minimise the spread of Coronavirus in South Australia.

To protect the people we support, non-essential visitors are not able to enter the homes within our service and the Northgate Aged Care facility. Non-essential activities outside the homes are also stopping, including group day activities.

This is in place from Wednesday 18 March until Tuesday 31 March but will be reviewed and updated according to the advice of health authorities.

Why are these changes happening?

Coronavirus is contagious, and the steps Accommodation Services is taking are designed to help contain and delay the spread of infection to reduce the burden on the health system and services.

Australia has learned from other countries that acting early is crucial, and social distancing is likely to be more effective in helping to slow the spread.

In short, the changes in the houses are about helping keep the people we support and our staff safe.

Our decision also follows Australian Government advice on Sunday 15 March to protect vulnerable Australians by reducing visitors to all residential aged care facilities and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We understand that some of these actions will be inconvenient, but with everyone working together we have the best chance of limiting and slowing the spread of coronavirus in South Australia.

What does 'non-essential' mean?

'Non-essential' is everyone except for people required for medical needs or delivery of the support service.

It also means there will be no outgoing trips without the express written permission of the Area Manager.

What are the exceptions to these changes?

While we expect that our staff continue to provide support as normally as possible to people in their homes at this time, we accept that there may be unique circumstances that require some flexibility.

Area Managers will respond to these specialist needs such as unique arrangements for emergency visits if a client is ill.

To assist with challenging behaviours, individual outings may be arranged where safe and appropriate in open unpopulated spaces.

What about people in the houses who go to work?

There may also be exceptions for people living in the houses who work.

We will continue to support people to work by liaising closely with employers to ensure they are providing a safe and hygienic workplace.

Each house has particular needs, and we are working through how these arrangements may change from house to house.

Does my family member or friend know what is happening?

Information has been circulated to staff so they can notify those they support about the changes and what they mean.

While staff are being advised about hygiene measures to continue to follow in the houses, we are informing those we support too around hand hygiene, prevention of spread and the importance of social distancing from the wider community.

We are also in contact with key organisations like day options providers and employers about these changes.

Can key family members still be in contact with family members or friends in the houses?

We want life to continue as normally as possible for the people we support in their homes during this time, while still trying to maintain social distancing to help prevent the risk of spread and keep everyone safe.

We know that, for many of you, maintaining contact with your family member or friend is important.

Please consider having a phone chat or speaking to staff about using technology such as FaceTime or other video calls (each house has an iPad).

If you are a key family member and would like to maintain contact in person during this time, we are requiring that you make arrangements with the Area Manager to help us manage safety for the people we support. This may include some checks to make sure you are well.

Where is Accommodation Services receiving information to make decisions?

We are taking the expert advice of SA Health and the State and Australian Governments to inform our decisions around changes in the houses.

How will Accommodation Services continue to support people in their homes during this period?

Each house has a plan for how these changes will be managed and in-house activities for each person that we support.

We are developing guidelines that involve recording client needs and sharing positive behaviour support strategies to address anxieties and specific behaviours of concern.

We are also trying to maintain lifestyle opportunities and stimulating activities within homes which could include activities such as gardening, cooking or games.

Area Managers are involved in the review of each home's needs, and our Positive Behaviour Support Team is developing strategies to assist the situation.

What happens if a person supported in the houses is exposed to Coronavirus?

We are adhering to the expert advice of SA Health around all procedures to follow if there is suspected exposure to Coronavirus in a house that we service.

We are also providing our staff with the latest information so they can monitor the people they support for any adverse health effects or symptoms and take swift action.

Will there still be staff at the houses?

We are committed to continuing to provide the highest level of support and care to all of the people we support.

We will continue to ensure there are adequate staff in all homes so this support can be provided.

Staff are also closely monitoring the people they support in case they become unwell and will take quick action if this happens.

We are continuing to encourage all staff to ensure they and those they support keep practising good hand hygiene, and sneeze/cough hygiene.

What is Accommodation Services doing to support staff?

We are urging our staff to continue to monitor their own health and have provided instructions that they must follow if they have concerns about their health or become unwell.

Other staff are also being identified and trained to ensure that all houses continue to have adequate resources during this time.

What is the phone number to call for further information about these changes?

An Accommodation Services COVID-19 phone line is the general contact point for your queries.

The number is: **1800 952 962**

It is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, excluding weekends and public holidays.

You may wish to contact the local Area Manager or Team Leader to discuss specific matters to do with your family member or friend in our service.

How can you help?

If you think you could help to support your family member or friend in their home at this time and you would like to, we are keen to hear from you.

Please phone us on the Accommodation Services COVID-19 line **1800 952 962** so we can discuss appropriate options with you. Alternatively, contact the Area Manager.

Your input could include some of the things your family member or friend might like to do in their home during this period to keep them occupied and positive.

How will Accommodation Services keep you informed?

To provide you with the latest information about changes in the houses and our services, we are setting up this webpage: www.dhs.sa.gov.au/familyupdate

Having a webpage is the quickest way for us to provide you with information about the changes in the houses. The information on this webpage will be updated so please check it regularly to ensure you have the latest details.

In the event of an emergency specifically involving your family member or friend, we will immediately contact the primary contact in our system.

Where are further general Coronavirus information and updates available?

Given this is a continually changing situation, we recommend that you regularly check the SA Health website for information: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

Other helpful online links are available via our webpage:

www.dhs.sa.gov.au/familyupdate

You could also keep on-hand the Australian Government Coronavirus Health Information Line: 1800 020 080.