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| Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Policy |
| Victorian COVID-19 Public Health Unit Network |
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| OFFICIAL |

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# DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY

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| **Version** | **Date** | **Key changes from prior version** |
| V.1.0 | 16 October 2021 | N/A |
| V.1.1 | 31 October 2021 | Inclusion: Reduced quarantine period for vaccinated non-household primary close contacts.  Revision: Exposure Site Risk Assessment Tool.  Removal: Deputy Chief Health Officer notification for confirmed cases classified ‘Lost to Follow Up’. |
| V.2.0 | 20 November 2021 | Inclusion: Re-exposure period for recovered cases, infectious period definition  Revision: Contact definitions, outbreak definitions, isolation period for confirmed cases, quarantine period for contacts  Removal: References to Tier 1 exposure sites |
| V.2.1 | 30 November 2021 | Inclusion: Case and contact definition notes to align with the Pandemic (Quarantine, Isolation and Testing) Orders  Inclusion: Management of contacts for aircraft passengers and crew  Removal: Border permits for interstate travellers |
| V.2.2 | 22 December 2021 | Revision: Contact definitions, outbreak definitions, quarantine, and testing requirements for contacts, updated Re-exposure period for recovered cases, addition of reinfection |
| V.3.0 | 30 December 2021 | Revision: Requirement for confirmed cases to notify all contacts. Changes to isolation, quarantine, and testing settings.  Inclusion: Presumptive case definition |
| V.4.0 | 7 January 2022 | Revision: Phase 2 settings – “presumptive case” replaced with “probable case”, requirement for probable cases to notify all contacts and Department of Health. |
| V.5.0 | 6 February 2022 | Revision: changes to outbreak definitions, revision of reinfection and re-exposure period. |

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose

The Case, Contact, and Outbreak Management Policy (the policy) describes the State’s approach to case, contact, exposure site and outbreak management to ensure Victorian guidance aligns with national policy and is consistent across the decentralised response to COVID-19 in Victoria.

The policy will be updated to reflect changes in national guidance and local strategy.

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Communicable Disease Network of Australia Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) National Guidelines for Public Health Units](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm) and locally developed protocols and standard operating procedures.

## Governance

The Department of Health (the department) through the Intelligence, Case, Contact and Outbreak Management (ICCOM) Branch of the COVID-19 Division is responsible for the provision of overall guidance on case, contact and outbreak management and for coordinating the response across the Local Public Health Units (LPHUs). The current operating model has nine LPHUs; three in metropolitan Melbourne and six in regional Victoria.

The policy is endorsed by the Victorian COVID-19 Public Health Unit Network (VCPHUN) and approved by the Deputy Chief Health Officer, ICCOM.

1. CASE MANAGEMENT

## Objectives of case management

Contact with confirmed and probable cases should occur as soon as possible after notification to facilitate safe isolation and ensure all urgent medical, support and welfare needs are met.

## Definition

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| A **confirmed case** of COVID-19 requires laboratory definitive evidence:  Laboratory definitive evidence:  Detection of SARS-CoV-2 by nucleic acid amplification testing (NAAT);  OR  Isolation of SARS-CoV-2 in cell culture, with confirmation using a NAAT;  OR  SARS-CoV-2 IgG seroconversion or a four-fold or greater increase in SARS-CoV-2 antibodies of any immunoglobulin subclass including ‘total’ assays in acute and convalescent sera, in the absence of vaccination.  AND  Has NOT been determined to be an historic case, nor false positive NAAT result, nor recently recovered confirmed case within the past 30 days, see below.  A **probable case** of COVID-19 requires laboratory suggestive evidence:  Laboratory suggestive evidence:  Detection of SARS-CoV-2 by rapid antigen (RA) test. |

Notes: Use of the terminology ‘confirmed case’ and ‘probable case’ in this document and the definition of ‘diagnosed persons’ as described in the Quarantine Isolation and Testing Orders (QIT) Orders is intended to, and should be interpreted to have, the same meaning.

Historical case and suspected false positive NAAT definitions are included in the [CDNA COVID-19 National Guidelines for Public Health Units](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm).

## Infectious period

A person diagnosed with COVID-19 is considered to be infectious;

1. If symptomatic at the time of the test, 48 hours prior to onset of symptoms or
2. If asymptomatic at the time of the test, 48 hours prior to the first positive specimen collection

until 7 days after the date on which the first positive specimen was collected; or;

until such other time as specified by an officer or nominated representative of the Department.

For the purposes above, a positive specimen may refer to either a NAAT or RA test.

Confirmed and probable cases must remain in isolation for the duration of their infectious period as defined above.

## Key activities

### Notification

Laboratories and requesting medical practitioners are required to notify the department of all confirmed cases of COVID-19 as soon as practicable, and within 24 hours, under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

Probable cases of COVID-19 are required to notify the department as soon as practicable upon returning a positive RA test result.

### Contact with case

All confirmed and probable cases are contacted by the department by text message on notification.

Completion of a case interview may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Confirmed and probable cases must take all reasonable steps to notify:

* all close contacts, including household members with whom they reside and other individuals that meet the definition of a close contact (see below for definition);
* their workplace(s) or education facility if they attended during their infectious period; and
* all social contacts they have been in contact with during their infectious period.

Confirmed and probable cases, through the notification SMS, are directed to online resources outlining their isolation requirements and obligations to notify contacts: see [Contact Management](#_Objectives_of_contact).

### Clinical Management

The clinical management of an eligible confirmed or probable case is the responsibility of the COVID-19 Positive Pathways program or equivalent clinical program.

### Welfare support

Provision of welfare support to confirmed and probable cases and their households is the responsibility of the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and is facilitated through the Areas of Operations, and partner organisations including local government. Supports include but are not limited to; financial assistance, emergency accommodation, food, and other supplies.

### Release from isolation

All confirmed and probable cases are automatically released from isolation on Day 7 from their first positive specimen collection date (RA test, NAAT) without consideration of their clinical history or assessment of symptoms. Day 0 is the specimen collection date (RA test, NAAT).

If, however, a probable case has undertaken a NAAT within 48 hours of their RA test result and returned a negative result, they may be released from isolation.

Confirmed and probable cases are provided their future clearance date upon initial notification and contact from the department.

At their discretion, hospitals, aged care and other residential facilities can continue to manage cases who are significantly immunocompromised or have ongoing symptoms beyond the day 7 clearance date, under appropriate precautions.

### Lost to follow up

Reasonable attempts to contact a case, via SMS or phone call for cases with a landline only, must be exhausted before classifying a confirmed case as ‘lost to follow up’. Contact attempts may include data linkage, Household Engagement Program referral, and Victoria Police referrals may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

### Death notifications

For surveillance purposes, a COVID-19 death is defined as a death in a confirmed COVID-19 case, unless there is a clear alternative cause of death that is unrelated to COVID-19 (e.g. trauma). For a death to be classified as a COVID-19 death there should be no period of complete recovery from COVID-19 between the COVID illness and death of the person. Where a Coroner’s report is available, these findings are to be reflected as the definitive determination. All COVID-19 deaths should be notified to ICCOM.

### Expert review panel

An Expert Review Panel (the panel) may be convened at the request of a public health unit to adjudicate on the diagnosis of COVID-19 for specific cases, including identifying false positive diagnoses. Evidence to be considered includes clinical presentation, epidemiological information, and laboratory test results. The panel determines whether the initial diagnosis is consistent with the laboratory, clinical and epidemiological findings, and may also advise on the likely timing of infection.

### Reinfection and re-exposure period for recovered cases

Reinfection is defined as a subsequent confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection in a person with a past known history of confirmed COVID-19, that is determined to be a separate episode to the first based on epidemiological and/or laboratory findings. SARS-CoV-2 RNA or antigen detection must be greater than 30 days after the first date of release from isolation to be considered reinfection.

If a recently recovered case of COVID-19 is identified as a close contact of a confirmed or probable case, they do not need to quarantine again if:

* the re-exposure was less than 30 days since the recovered case’s release from isolation date.

Within this 30-day period, recovered cases:

* can continue to attend high-risk settings.
* do not need to be furloughed from work if re-exposed.
* do not need to participate in surveillance testing as part of their employment or education if re-exposed.

If a recovered case develops new symptoms during the 30-day period, they should remain at home while unwell and consider seeking medical attention to be assessed and possibly tested for a variety of infections, although reinfection with COVID-19 is very unlikely.

1. CONTACT MANAGEMENT

## Objectives of contact management

The purpose of contact management is to identify and notify individuals who have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 to facilitate safe quarantine and prevent ongoing transmission.

## Contact definitions

Note: Definitions applying to workplace or education facility contacts, within this policy are intended to apply to the category of ‘Exposed persons’ as described within the QIT Orders.

### Close contact

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| A **close contact** is defined as an individual that resides or stays overnight in the same premises as a confirmed case or probable case or has had a total of four or more hours of contact (cumulative) in a residential setting\* during their infectious period, OR;  An individual who has been determined to be a close contact of a diagnosed person by an officer or nominated representative of the department, including in the event of an outbreak, and has been given notice of this. |

\*A **residential setting** is a building or a part of a building where individuals:

1. spend the night for sleeping; including a house, apartment, or other private dwelling, and
2. share facilities for acts of daily living which have the potential to create exposure between residents.

A residential setting includes:

1. Aged care facilities
2. Military residential settings
3. Boarding schools
4. Boarding houses
5. Homeless shelters
6. Maritime vessels

*Close contact* may also be assessed to have occurred, or close contacts identified, when there is reasonable evidence of exposure, for example in the context of an outbreak.

### Exposed Person (workplace contact)

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| A **workplace contact** is defined as an individual who does not meet the close contact definition and who – in any workplace or education facility - has had:   * at least 15 minutes face to face contact, OR * greater than 2 hours within the same room\* with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 during their infectious period. |

\*Same room refers to a smaller indoor space (<100m2), for example a classroom or shared office.

Please refer to the relevant Contact Assessment and Management Guidance documents for further guidance.

### Social contact

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| A **social contact** is defined as an individual who does not meet the close contact definition and who outside a workplace or education facility having had:   * at least 15 minutes face to face contact, OR * greater than 2 hours within the same room\* with a confirmed case or probable case of COVID-19 during their infectious period. |

### Key activities

**Identification and notification**

* A case must take reasonable steps to notify close and social contacts of their testing and quarantine requirements.
* A case must take reasonable steps to notify their workplace(s) or educational setting. Workplace and education contacts must be identified and notified of their testing requirements by the relevant setting.

**Quarantine**

Close contacts

* All close contacts, regardless of their vaccination status or vaccine eligibility, must quarantine for 7 days:
  + If continuing to reside with the case, from the specimen collection date of first case in household,
  + If not continuing to reside with the case, from the date of last contact whilst the case was infectious.

Workplace and social contacts

* There are no quarantine requirements for workplace or social contacts.

**Testing**

Testing requirements and recommendations for close contacts, exposed persons (workplace contacts) and social contacts are specified in the [Testing Requirements for Contacts and Exposed Persons](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/pandemic-order-register).

Education facilities

* All students and staff are strongly recommended to comply with the following surveillance testing recommendations:
  + Mainstream schools: twice a week RA testing
  + Specialist schools: five times a week RA testing
* Should an exposure or outbreak occur at an education facility, there are no additional testing requirements, however the surveillance testing recommendation should be reinforced.
* Symptomatic staff and students must undertake a RA test, or NAAT test if RA testing is unable to be performed.

1. EXPOSURE SITE MANAGEMENT

## Objectives of exposure site management

Exposure site management aims to identify individuals who may have been exposed to a case and aims to ensure there is no ongoing environmental risk at the site.

## Key activities

**Workplaces and education facilities**

**Workplaces** includes any setting where Occupational Health and Safety laws apply.

Confirmed and probable cases are required to notify their workplace if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 and attended an indoor space at the work premises during their infectious period.

If the case has attended their workplace during their infectious period, the facility must take reasonable steps to:

* identify and notify all contacts (if relevant)
* provide all contacts with testing requirements as outlined above.
* collect, record, and store a list of all contacts and their results.

Workplaces are required to notify the department in the event of an outbreak defined by the relevant settings below.

Evidence of cleaning certificates and approval to reopen after cleaning has been completed is not required but may be considered in some circumstances. Support and guidance may be provided on request.

**Education facilities**

**Education facilities** are defined as premises at which a childcare or early childhood service is provided, premises at which an outside school hours care service is provided, a school and school boarding premises.

Confirmed and probable cases are required to notify their education facility if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 and attended and indoor space at the facility during their infectious period.

If the case has attended the education facility during their infectious period, the facility must take reasonable steps to:

* notify the parents, guardians and carers of the persons enrolled at the education facility during the relevant infectious period of the potential exposure.
* collect, record, and store a list of all confirmed and probable cases, date of notification, date(s) of attendance during their infectious period and a list of all exposed workers at the facility.

**Other settings**

Routine exposure site management is not required but may be considered in exceptional circumstances. Support and guidance may be provided on request by the department or LPHU.

Referrals to the Infection Prevention and Control Response and Occupational Physicians teams are not routinely required but may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Website publication**

Exposure sites are not published online but public communication may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

1. OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT

## Objectives of outbreak management

Outbreak management aims to control ongoing transmission through active case finding, contact identification, environmental assessment and consequence management.

## Definition

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| ​An outbreak in a **residential aged care facility** is defined as:​   * two or more residents of a residential aged care facility, who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the same wing/area within 7 days, and were onsite at the residential aged care facility at any time during their infectious period; OR * five or more cases in staff and/or residents of the residential aged care facility diagnosed with COVID-19 within 7 days, and worked onsite at the residential aged care facility at any time during their infectious period.   In **all other settings** (excluding households), an outbreak is defined as five or more persons who are:   * diagnosed with COVID-19; AND * epidemiologically linked; AND​ * diagnosed with COVID-19 within seven days, commencing from the time that the first person is diagnosed. |

## Notification and response

Settings are required to notify the department if the relevant outbreak definition is met.

The outbreak definitions do not preclude a setting from contacting the department for pre-emptive advice or support.

Settings are encouraged to notify the department of vulnerabilities associated with multiple confirmed cases, such as when service deliverability is impacted, impending critical failures, or vulnerability of confirmed cases or exposed persons.

Outbreak notifications should trigger the provision of guidance and advice with active outbreak management only occurring in certain circumstances.

## Outbreak management activities

Where an outbreak team from the department or an LPHU provides direct public health input, key activities to be performed in conjunction with the outbreak facility may include:

* Establishment of an Outbreak Management Team
* Agree outbreak and contact definitions
* Develop a testing strategy
* Lead an environmental investigation
* Establish an Incident Management Team if required
* Outbreak reporting

**Outbreak Management Team**

An Outbreak Management Team (OMT) is a multi-agency public health-focused group that is led by either an LPHU or by an ICCOM team with accountability derived from the Chief Health Officer. Its primary goal is to ensure public health control measures are implemented to contain or reduce the spread of COVID-19. Other specialist stakeholder agencies may be invited to attend based on the outbreak setting (e.g. Department of Justice and Community Safety, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Department of Education Training, Department of Family, Fairness and Housing).

**Incident Management Team**

An Incident Management Team (IMT) is responsible for managing the wider impacts of the outbreak; this includes establishment of testing centres, provision of food and accommodation support to cases or contacts, liaising with community organisations and local government to ensure robust communications and partnerships, and emergency management logistics and reporting.

1. Supporting documents

## Reference documents

[COVID-19 Communicable Disease Network of Australia National Guidelines for Public Health Units](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/7A8654A8CB144F5FCA2584F8001F91E2/$File/wCOVID-19-SoNG-v4.8.docx)

## Contact management guidelines

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| **Setting** | **Last Updated** |
| [Contact Assessment and Management Guidance: healthcare services (hospitals)](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthcare-service-contact-assessment-and-management-guidance-health-services-hospitals) | 13 January 2022 |
| [Contact Assessment and Management Guidance: primary care, community-based healthcare and emergency services](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/contact-assessment-and-management-guidance-primary-care-community-based-healthcare-and-emergency) | 19 January 2022 |
| [Residential Aged Care Facility COVID-19 Furlough and Worker Mobility Guidance](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/covid-19-furlough-policies-and-guidance) | 19 January 2021 |