

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What COVID-19 means for children and young people in care in Victoria

I am in foster care – what happens if my carers get sick? Will I stay here or go somewhere else?

Your agency is working with your carer to have a backup plan if this occurs.

It may be that another adult member of your household can become your main carer for a while, or you may stay temporarily with another carer while your carer gets well.

Depending on your carer's house, your carer may be able to self-quarantine in one part of the house while you and others stay in the house.

More information about self-quarantine can be found at:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>



I am in residential care - what will happen with the people supporting me and the care workers in the house?

The new rules in place for all Victorian households apply to residential care homes (for example, you can't have friends visit the house, you should stay in your house unless you need to leave for a medical appointment or school).

Residential care workers will be with you in the house as they always are (workers are not considered to be visitors). However, to keep levels of contact as low as possible some of the other workers who normally support you outside the resi may contact you by phone or on-line. Also, you may find that some appointments are cancelled if they are not essential at the current time.

Can I still see my worker/CSO? If not what sort of contact will I have?

Case workers are currently limiting contact in person to emergency situations, but you can still have contact with your worker via face time, skype or phone. If you have an agency case manager, you can also contact them for support.

I am in foster care – what if happens if I get sick? Will I stay here or go somewhere else?

The likelihood of you getting coronavirus is still very low. If you have coronavirus symptoms including fever or chills or a serious chest infection with a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath (for symptoms see <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-self-assessment>) you can get tested at one of the assessment centres.

The criteria for who can get tested changes regularly, so it is best to check on the DHHS website at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>.

If you have coronavirus, the aim is for you to stay with your carer and be looked after safely with them. If this is not possible, you may stay temporarily with another carer so you can receive the best possible care whilst getting better.



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I am in residential care - what if I get sick?

If you get sick with corona virus you may be able to self-quarantine in your bedroom if you are fully co-operative with the guidelines. Residential care workers will be there to support you within the physical distancing rules and make sure you have food and access to medical care. Your workers will explain to you that you need to stay in your room until you are well. This may be for two weeks and the aim is stop the spread of the virus.

Your worker may need to use gloves, a face mask, goggles and/or a gown (Personal Protective Equipment) when they come into contact with you. They may also ask you to put on a mask if you need to go out of your room to use the bathroom/toilet and they will ask you to wash your hands regularly with soap.

If you are unable to self-quarantine safely in your bedroom, your carers will discuss with you staying temporarily in another home until you are well or in some cases all other young people will move out of the house to prevent the spread of the virus. If you were to get very sick you would be taken to hospital and looked after and then return to your home when you are better.

More information about self-quarantine can be found here <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

Will I still get to see family who I don't live with?

You will be able to continue to have contact with your family, however, the way that the contact happens may need to change for a while. This may be different for each person, but the plan is that face-to-face meetings will be kept to a minimum and online or telephone contact used instead. This is in line with what everyone in Victoria is doing.

If you need to change the way you have contact with your family for a little while, talk to your worker about remote options such as FaceTime or phone calls. If you need phone credit or access to data on your mobile, ask your carer or worker if they can help you top up your credit.

I am in residential care - What if one of my workers gets sick?

If one of your workers gets sick, they will not be able to come to work until they have recovered. You will be cared for by an alternative carer.

If it is confirmed that your worker has coronavirus and they have been working in your house within the last 14 days, you and the other young people in your house, will need to self-quarantine in case you have caught coronavirus from the worker. This means that you will need to stay in your house for 14 days and keep checking to see whether you get any symptoms of coronavirus. You should all make sure that you wash your hands regularly during this time and try to minimise contact with each other.

If at the end of 14 days you are well, you can come out of quarantine.



How can I access a laptop if we move to home schooling / remote education?

To get the latest information from your school about schooling and how to get laptops and other devices you can visit <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parent/Pages/coronavirus-advice-parents.aspx>



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Will DHHS close down?

No DHHS and Child Protection will not close, although some workers will be working from home some of the time instead of the office.

DHHS staff will have ways that you can contact them remotely, like phone and skype.

What are my options if I can't contact my case worker?

If you are unable to contact your case worker, you should try to speak with your agency worker (if you have one).

Ask your carer for help if you do not have their contact details. You can also ask to talk with your case worker's manager, and still contact the complaints team to raise a concern about your care.

You can contact the complaints team on ph. 1300884706 or email through to central.feedback@dhhs.vic.gov.au. There is more information about how to make a complaint at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-complaint-children-and-young-people-out-home-care>.

Where can I find more information about COVID-19 in Victoria for young people?

There is a lot of information about coronavirus available online. Some of it is good information and some of it is not to be trusted. The government websites are a trusted place to go for the latest information. These include:

www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/facts/about-coronaviruses-and-covid19
<https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au/keeping-yourself-safe/mental-health-support>

If you would like to access other supports:

Beyondblue – 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au

1800RESPECT – 1800 737 732 or www.1800respect.org.au

Headspace – www.headspace.org.au/

Lifeline – 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467 or www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au