

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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

Coronavirus, or COVID-19, has meant some pretty BIG changes for many people across the world and as a child or young person in care, you might have questions about whether anything will be different for you. Below is a list of the most common questions CREATE has been asked by children and young people - beneath each question is the best answer we can give at the moment.

It's important to remember that just like how every person is different, every situation is different! Things are changing all the time and we are trying to update this information as much as possible at the moment so please stay tuned for more info!

Are you finding things hard at the moment and need some support? There is help out there. Visit [our page here](#) to find out what's available. Or are you looking for ideas of what to do at home? [Visit this page](#). Or do you want just some more information about coronavirus and what to do if you are feeling sick? Try the [Queensland Health website here](#) for information about the virus, how it spreads and how you can look after yourself.

IMPORTANT: This is all we know at this stage but we will be sure to get more information to you once we have found out more. In the meantime it's a good idea to talk someone in your safety and support network that you trust, like your worker or carer. They may not have all the answers but they can try and find out for you. Make sure you've got the contact information you need. You can also reach your child safety officer through your kicbox app.

I am in foster care – what if happens if one or both of my carers gets sick with the coronavirus? Will I stay here or go somewhere else?

When adults get sick, they usually still look after the young people in their care. Because COVID-19 is different to other colds and flus, when someone has it, they need to stay completely away from others so they don't pass it on.

If your carer gets sick, they'll talk to all the people who care about you to make a plan. They'll work out the best thing to do to help your carer and keep you safe and well. They'll also talk to you about it so you know what's happening.



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

The first thing to remember is that in Australia, not many people have been sick with coronavirus compared to how many people live here. We are hearing a lot about it so that everyone can be informed and we can keep the virus from spreading to more people. We are doing pretty well with that so hopefully, most of us will never come in contact with it ***phew***.

Coronavirus is a sickness that can make us cough or have shortness of breath (like we're out of breath after running for a long time). Many people who get coronavirus also experience a fever, which is a word we use when people feel really hot or really cold for no reason. Some people have symptoms not that different from a cold, while others can get really unwell and may need to go to hospital. If you are feeling sick, or have any of these symptoms, you can talk to your carer and they will call the doctor to find out if you need to be tested. There is also a [self-assessment quiz](#) you can take online and a Coronavirus Hotline on **1800 020 080** you can call for advice.

The MOST IMPORTANT thing is: if you start to feel sick, tell your carer or caseworker! They will know what to do. If you are living independently then call **1800 020 080** and you will talk to an expert who can talk to you about how you are feeling and what to do next.

If you are in QLD, for more information go to [Queensland Health's coronavirus information](#).

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Will I be able to see my biological family including siblings?

You can stay connected to people important to you that you don't live with, if you usually get to see them, but the way you stay connected will have to change for the next little while. So that we can prevent the spread of coronavirus your contact with family will change from meeting them in person to chatting on the phone or via Facetime, Skype, Zoom, text or even good old fashioned letters in the post!

There are some differences between states and territories about family contact for children and young people in care during the coronavirus.

In Queensland, face-to-face contact will be considered on a case by case basis, with MOST birth family contact to move to remote methods, and it MUST move to remote methods if either the birth family member or you are feeling sick and coronavirus symptoms. Face-to-face contact will only happen if it is safe and everyone will have to help prevent the spread of the virus by washing their hands before and after family time. You may have to have contact somewhere outside to help with social distancing.

If you aren't able to see your family face-to-face, talk to your caseworker about remote ways to have contact with them through video chats or phone calls. Remember if you want to talk with your child safety officer, you can call them or use the kicbox app.

If you are worried about data limits, need phone credit or access to data on your mobile phone, ask your carer, worker or child safety officer if they can help you top up your credit. Also, if you want to make sure the apps you are using are safe, there is lots of great information on the [eSafety Commissioner eSafety guide](#) where they give advice on privacy, safety and security features of all the latest apps.

It is important that everyone in care, especially Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people, can be connected to family, community and culture during this time. If this isn't happening, it's ok to complain. Visit our [Speak Up](#) page to find out how.

I am in foster or kinship care - do I have to go to school?

In Queensland, schools are open for a range of different children in the community, including the children of essential workers and children/young people in care. So you are able to go to school and be supervised there. Your foster or kinship carer or your child safety officer can contact your school and confirm these arrangements for you. It will be a bit different to how it usually is though! There probably won't be many people there and you may be with people you are not usually in a class with. Also, you might not have the same teacher each day.

If it turns out you do need to do home school/school remotely then you should be given the stuff you need to do this; this could include a laptop and any other material you might need to do school work. Talk to your carer or caseworker if there is something you need to do school from home.

Will the Department close down?

No, Child Safety is responsible for children and young people in care and will not close down, it will continue to be there for you and your carers. Talk to your carers or workers, or if you want to contact your child safety officer go to our [Speak Up](#) page or use the kicbox app

Can I still see my caseworker?

Yes you should still be having contact with them, your worker will still make contact with you regularly. If they can't contact you, someone from the same Service Centre who knows you will. This might not be face-to-face for now unless essential, but can be over the phone, through SMS, emails, online video conferencing or the kicbox app. You should know who your worker is. If you don't know who this is, ask your carer or resi worker or call the numbers for your state on our [Speak Up](#) page.



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

I am in residential care – will there be many changes at my house because of coronavirus?

One phrase you might start hearing quite a lot is ‘Social Distancing’. Social distancing means increasing physical space between you and other people. It is important to exercise social distancing because COVID-19 is most likely to spread by close contact with an infected person, or by contact with droplets from an infected person’s cough or sneeze. So, the more space between you and others, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

People are allowed to leave their home for things, such as:

- Shopping for food and other items
- Exercising – in a public space such as a park, limited to no more than 2 people
- Going out for medical appointments or to the pharmacy
- Providing care or support to another person in a place other than your home
- Going to work if you cannot work from home

When people do leave their homes for essential things, they must practice social distancing. This means:

- Keeping 1.5 metres away from others
- Avoiding physical greetings such as handshakes, hugs and kisses
- Using tap and go instead of cash
- Travelling at quiet times and avoiding crowds
- Avoiding public gatherings and at risk groups like older people
- Practicing good hygiene

The need to do Social Distancing could mean some changes to what happens in your home. In Queensland, the government has asked resi services to make sure that;

- Everyone (young people, workers) will be discouraged from actions that involve contact with other people and/or their belongings - like sharing clothes or using another person’s phone.
- There might be a roster introduced where different children/young people are allowed into common areas (i.e the living room) at different times so that everyone’s not close together all the time.

For the time being, transport and leaving the house more generally will only happen if it’s really needed – this means any regular activities you do (e.g sport, music etc) probably won’t be on – but remember this is only temporary! Some meetings with your support people will now need to happen via phone or video chat, not at the resi. During this time it’s really important you have a mobile phone and credit to make sure you can contact your important people and still feel connected to them.

You should feel confident that the carers and workers in the house will know what to do if someone in the house is feeling sick and if it turns out they have coronavirus.

For more information about social distancing go to [this page](#).

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Do I have to leave the resi during COVID-19 when I turn 18?

CREATE has asked all governments around Australia to tell us the answer to this as we are very concerned that young people may have to find accommodation and set up independent living at this challenging time.

In Queensland, Child Safety is making sure they continue to support young people as they transition to adulthood. This is a priority and includes working together to make sure young people have a safe place to live when they turn 18.

I am in residential care – What if one of my workers or someone else in the house has Coronavirus symptoms?

If one of the workers/carers in the house gets sick then they won’t be at the house until they recover (even if it’s just a cold). If it turns out they are sick with Coronavirus they will have to self-isolate for 14 days and won’t be able to come back to the house until the doctor says they no longer have coronavirus. If you have had contact with that worker, you may need to self-isolate. But you will be told if that needs to happen and what you will need to do.

If someone in the house has come into contact with someone else who has coronavirus or is sick with coronavirus themselves, then you need to talk to your carers and workers about what will happen.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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I am in residential care - What if I am worried I have Coronavirus?

Coronavirus is a sickness that can make us cough or have shortness of breath (like we're out of breath after running for a long time). Many people who get coronavirus also experience a fever, which is a word we use when people feel really hot or really cold for no reason. Some people have symptoms not that different from a cold, while others can get really unwell and may need to go to hospital.

The MOST IMPORTANT thing is if you start to feel sick, tell one of the carers or workers in the house OR if you feel comfortable, tell a caseworker or other adult you can trust. They will know what to do and they will support you if you get sick - that is their job!

If needed, there might be some change to the physical layout of your house to make sure everyone stays healthy. If you do need to move from the resi because of health or safety worries for you or other children/young people in the resi, you should be told information about HOW and When the move will happen.

I am feeling really isolated what can I do?

CREATE understands that this is a big problem for young people and we are encouraging you to connect with your friends, family, CREATE to chat and talk about how you are feeling. There is a lot of information and activities on YouTube, and the Internet and lots of activities are scheduled for Queensland. More info on the exciting things CREATE is doing will be distributed to CYP soon.

You can also contact:
Beyondblue - 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au
Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au
1800RESPECT - 1800 737 732 or 1800respect.org.au
Headspace - headspace.org.au/
Lifeline - 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au
Suicide Call Back Service - 1300 659 467 or suicidecallbackservice.org.au

I am in residential care - what if I have to self-isolate?

This means staying home (and in your bedroom) as much as possible, but it doesn't you will be locked in there or that you won't be able to ever leave! You will be able to leave your room for food, for medical appointments and for emergencies. Residential care workers and medical staff like doctors will be there to support you, though your residential workers / carers might have to wear some personal protective equipment (like masks) while in the house with you.

During this time it's really important you;

- Still have access to any medication you have been taking regularly
- Have a list of important contact numbers for people such as your caseworker, counsellor / psychologist (or [Kids Helpline](#)), friends and family you are close to
- Have a mobile phone and credit to make sure you can contact your important people and still feel connected to them
- Have access to the internet and other materials that can give you something to do while you are in self-isolation.

Every resi is different so make sure you talk to the carers / workers in the house about what's going on at your resi.

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

If you are having trouble getting in contact with your caseworker it's probably because they are extremely busy at the moment - if you can't get through on the phone then try sending them a text if you have their mobile number, or send them an email. If they you don't get a response the first time you try then try again - if you still don't get a response try to ask to speak to your caseworker's manager or use the information [here](#).

Looking for more information about what's happening in Queensland?

Information from the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women about coronavirus can be found [here](#)
Information from the Office of Public Guardian (Community Visitors) about coronavirus is located [here](#)