



Managing COVID-19 in your workplace

Small Business Toolkit

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Small Business
Development Corporation

smallbusiness.wa.gov.au
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Foreword

Since the first signs of COVID-19 disruption were seen in Australia in March 2020, small businesses have continually adapted to new and unexpected conditions.

Small businesses account for 97 per cent of all businesses in Western Australia, and provide many essential goods and services to communities right around our state. They range from non-employing businesses, to larger enterprises employing up to 20 people.

This guide is intended to give business owners a clear framework for managing COVID-19 in the workplace. Our goals are to both support the health and safety of business owners, employees and the community; and minimise the impact of the pandemic on small businesses.

Due to the wide variety of small businesses operating in WA, not all of the advice contained here will be relevant to you, for example if you don't employ staff or operate a 'brick and mortar' premises. This toolkit provides a set of broad principles to help you plan and prepare for COVID-19 outbreaks in your workplace and should be read in line with the latest Directions and Health advice at wa.gov.au.

I urge you to read through the toolkit to understand the recommended approach, which is designed to protect your business and allow you to continue operating through disruption.

As always, the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) is here to support you with advice for all the challenges you face in your business. Our contact details are included on the important [contacts page](#) overleaf.

David Eaton
Small Business Commissioner
Chief Executive Officer
Small Business Development Corporation

Important contacts

Government of Western Australia

 [wa.gov.au](https://www.wa.gov.au)

COVID-19 current updates and Directions.

Department of Health COVID-19 information helpline

 13 COVID (13 26843)

 <https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/>

COVID-19 information and health advice.


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 smallbusiness.wa.gov.au

Advice for small business owners including the latest COVID-19 business updates, business continuity resources and free, individualised advice on business matters.

Wageline

 1300 655 266

 <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/labour-relations/contact-wageline>

Guidance on employer obligations for employers in the Western Australian industrial relations system such as sole traders, unincorporated partnerships and some trusts.

Fair Work Ombudsman

 13 13 94

 <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

Guidance on employer obligations for employers in the national industrial relations system such as incorporated businesses (those with 'Pty Ltd' or 'Ltd' in their name).

Prepare

Step One: Develop a COVID Safety Plan

Prepare a COVID Safety Plan to ensure appropriate strategies are in place to reduce and mitigate risks in your workplace, based on the latest health advice.

COVID Safety Plans are not mandatory but can be used by any workplace as the basis of their COVID-19 response policies and procedures.

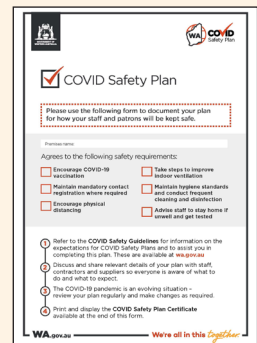
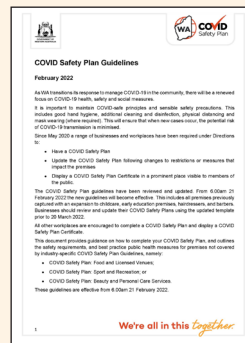
A COVID Safety Plan will assist you in planning and preparing for an outbreak. It provides specific advice on how to:

- Maintain hygiene standards and conduct frequent cleaning.
- Monitor vaccination – if your workplace is mandated, ensure processes are in place to check the vaccination status of staff. If your workplace is not mandated, develop a policy that encourages staff to be vaccinated against COVID-19, including getting a booster if eligible.
- Optimise ventilation – increase natural ventilation by opening windows and doors. If you cannot improve ventilation, consider whether enhanced cleaning, carbon dioxide monitoring, limiting the number of people in confined spaces, or air filtration devices are suitable for you.

Actions to take

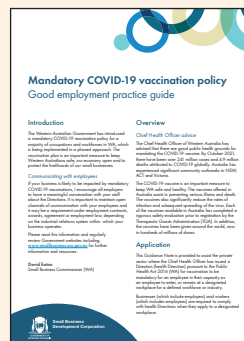
1. Review your existing COVID Safety Plan or download the guidelines and template and create your COVID Safety Plan.

- Industry-specific COVID Safety Guidelines and Plans are available for food and licensed venues; sport and recreation and beauty and personal care services.
- If your business or venue does not fall under these categories, use the 'General' plan and guidelines.



<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/covid-19-coronavirus-covid-safety-plans-and-guidelines>

2. If your business is mandated to check proof of vaccination for staff, download our [Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy: Good Employment Practice Guide](#) to assist you to implement this at your workplace.



<https://www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/coronavirus/mandatory-vaccinations-employer-guide>

Prepare

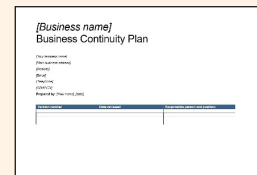
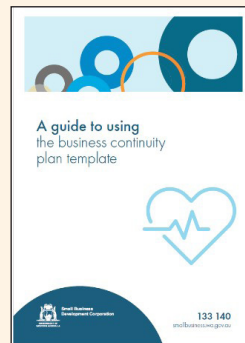
Step Two: Conduct a risk assessment and create a business continuity plan

Determine the likelihood and impact of a COVID-19 outbreak at your workplace and implement appropriate mitigations to minimise disruption and ensure business continuity.

- Review Worksafe OSH information.
- Plan for staff to work from home, if practical, or implement work teams or other measures to reduce risk of spread. Develop relevant policies and protocols to support these ways of working in your workplace.
- Consider and document what you will do if there is a COVID-19 exposure at your workplace.
- Identify staff responsible for leading the COVID-19 response in your workplace.
- Identify staff who will be responsible for environmental cleaning and provide training on cleaning procedures.
- Identify staff who can cover other roles if key staff members are unavailable.
- If you are a sole trader, make provision for being unable to work or interact with the public, such as rescheduling appointments for a later date.
- Consider the risks posed by contractors, suppliers, visitors and clients, and how your workplace will manage these risks.
- Prepare a communications plan to convey information to different audiences (the Department of Health, staff, suppliers and customers) about a case of COVID-19 at your workplace.

Actions to take

1. **Conduct a risk assessment and develop a business continuity plan for your workplace using our guide and template.**



<https://www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/legal-risk/risk-management>

2. **Undertake an environmental clean, following the correct procedures. Environmental cleaning guidelines for small business is available in the Appendix.**

Prepare

Step Three: Prepare your staff

Both you and your staff must understand what to do if they have been exposed to or contracted COVID-19.

You will need to specify whether sick or isolating staff will be able to access leave, such as personal or sick leave, carers leave, annual or unpaid leave. Different conditions may apply to different employees, depending on the agreement or contract that they are employed under.

If your staff members are not entitled to access paid leave, inform them about the State and Federal governments' isolation and disaster payments that they may be eligible for. Further details are available in the '[Respond](#)' section of this document.

Encourage all staff members to avoid coming into the workplace if they feel unwell.

Actions to take

1. Review your staff contracts to understand their entitlements and your obligations (see the [Respond](#) section of this document for more detail).

- *If unsure, contact:*
 - Wageline 1300 655 266 (Employers in the WA industrial relations system such as sole traders, unincorporated partnerships and some trusts).

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/labour-relations/contact-wageline>

- Fair Work Ombudsman 13 13 94 (Employers in the national industrial relations system such as incorporated businesses).

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

- *If applicable, refer staff to:*
 - [The Western Australian COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment](#) - \$320
 - [The Australian Government's Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#) - up to \$750 per seven days.

Please note, these two payments cannot be received for the same period of isolation, and eligibility criteria applies.

2. While all staff members are still present, cross train them in roles and/or document processes so that they can cover for each other in case of isolation or illness.

3. Start transitioning to remote work or split teams if possible to reduce risk of exposure.

Prepare

Step Four: Communication

Regular communication with your staff, customers and suppliers is an important step in managing COVID. Develop a communications plan for your organisation and your community.

- Ensure your workplace policies, procedures and outbreak management plan are communicated to staff.
- You may wish to develop versions of these policies to inform clientele, visitors, suppliers and contractors how your workplace is managing COVID-19, and to advise them of their responsibilities if relevant.
- Ensure your outbreak response communication roles and responsibilities are clear in advance of an outbreak, to reduce confusion.
- If you want to let your patrons and suppliers know that your premises is an exposure site, encourage them to visit the Department of Health's exposure site webpage for information.

Managing communications with staff and customers in a timely and pro-active manner is an important tool to help minimise any impact on your business.

Actions to take

1. **Create a document with simple messages and a decision tree or flow chart to use as a basis for staff and public messages, for example:**

Business with a premises that customers visit

"We would like to inform our valued clients that the Department of Health has notified us that a positive COVID-19 case attended our premises on Wednesday 2 March between 2.00pm and 4.00pm.

We closed our premises and conducted a deep clean as soon as we were informed of the exposure. All rostered staff have undertaken Rapid Antigen Tests and are following applicable procedures.

We have reopened for business as usual today and look forward to welcoming you. Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding."

Mobile business/sole trader (for example tradie, mobile hairdresser, counsellor)

"I have been informed by the Department of Health that I have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive with COVID-19.

I am following all health advice and self-testing.

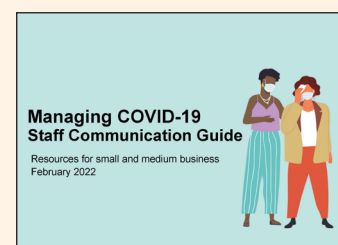
Should this affect your appointment, I will be in contact to refund or reschedule upcoming bookings.

I am sorry for the inconvenience and look forward to being able to see you in person again soon."

Where to use: Website, Facebook, Instagram, A4 notice next to check-in sign.

2. **Download the Managing COVID-19 Staff Communication Guide to access further resources to help small businesses manage communication with your staff.**

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/covid-19-coronavirus-posters-and-signage#managing-covid-19>



Prepare: Checklist

- Review your existing COVID Safety Plan or download the guidelines and template and create a COVID Safety Plan, ensuring all staff are familiar with it.
[🌐 https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/covid-19-coronavirus-covid-safety-plans-and-guidelines](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/covid-19-coronavirus-covid-safety-plans-and-guidelines)
- Manage staff vaccination requirements with our Good Employer Guide.
[🌐 https://www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/coronavirus/mandatory-vaccinations-employer-guide](https://www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/coronavirus/mandatory-vaccinations-employer-guide)
- Review WorkSafe Western Australia OSH information sheet.
[🌐 https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/managing-covid-19-risks-workplace](https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/managing-covid-19-risks-workplace)
- Undertake a risk assessment and create a Business Continuity Plan.
[🌐 https://www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/legal-risk/risk-management](https://www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/legal-risk/risk-management)
- Ensure you and your staff are familiar with environmental cleaning practices or you have identified a commercial cleaner who can provide environmental cleaning after a COVID-19 case has attended your premises. [See Appendix](#).
- Cross-train staff in each other's roles and document processes and procedures for coverage in case of illness or isolation.
- Understand your staff leave entitlements and your employer obligations in case of business closure, staff isolation or illness from COVID-19.
- Communicate with your staff about what will happen in the event of a COVID-19 exposure at the workplace, staff requirement to isolate or staff illness.
[🌐 https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/covid-19-coronavirus-posters-and-signage#managing-covid-19](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/covid-19-coronavirus-posters-and-signage#managing-covid-19)
- Create draft communications for customers, suppliers and other audiences in case your business is affected by COVID-19.

Respond

This section covers how to respond if your business premises or team members are exposed to or become ill with COVID-19.

COVID-19 exposure site - workers

If a worker returns a positive RAT or PCR test, they should inform the workplace of the positive result as soon as possible, especially if they have been at work while infectious. Once you become aware of a case of COVID-19 at your business, you should:

1. Advise the COVID-19 positive worker to return home immediately and follow current health guidelines.
2. Identify and list all workplace close contacts of the case. Include useful information, such as each contact's date of exposure to the case.
3. Inform close contacts in the workplace that they have been exposed to a person who is positive for COVID-19 and tell them to get tested and follow current protocols, as appropriate. Businesses will need to determine the best method of communication to ensure, where possible, all affected people have been reached.
4. Inform all workers (including health and safety representatives) to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and get tested. They can get tested with a PCR test or a RAT.
5. Undertake cleaning and disinfection.
6. Document all decisions and actions, and communicate with stakeholders.

For detailed information see the WA COVID-19 TTIQ (Test, Trace, Isolate and Quarantine) Plan and Guidance for the Management of COVID-19 in the Workplace from the Department of Health.

🌐 https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus/COVID19-information-for-business-and-industry/TTIQ-plan

🌐 <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/~media/Corp/Documents/Health-for/Infectious-disease/COVID19/TTIQ/Guidance-for-the-management-of-COVID-19-in-the-workplace.pdf>

Environmental cleaning

If your workplace is the site of a COVID-19 exposure, it's important to undertake environmental cleaning of the site.

Generally cleaning should be able to occur without a workplace having to close, however all areas used by the COVID-19 positive person must be vacated until cleaning has taken place. Ensure that you and your staff are familiar with environmental cleaning guidelines (see [Appendix](#)).

What are the entitlements for staff if the business needs to temporarily close?

Under the WA industrial relations system (which applies to sole traders, unincorporated partnerships and some trusts), depending on the award your business falls under, you may be able to stand down staff without pay if you can demonstrate there has been a stoppage of work and that stoppage was not reasonably preventable by the employer, and that the employees to be stood down could not be otherwise usefully employed.

🌐 [Visit the DMIRS website to find out more.](#)

Under the national industrial relations system, you can choose to stand employees down without pay if there is a sudden workplace closure that is outside of the business owner's control. This includes closure due to government direction or a stoppage due to a lack of supply beyond the control of the employer.

🌐 [Visit the Fairwork website to find out more.](#)

Respond

Self-isolation of staff

People who are a symptomatic close contact of a COVID-19 positive case must self-isolate for seven days from the date of contact with a positive case, following these protocols:

- **Take a PCR or RAT on Day One or as soon as possible**
 - + *If positive* – follow positive case guidelines below
 - *If negative* – stay in isolation
- **Take another RAT after 24 hours**
 - + *If the second RAT is positive* – follow positive case guidelines
 - *If negative* – and no new household members have tested positive - take a RAT again on day seven, before ending isolation

Asymptomatic close contacts

Close contacts without symptoms no longer have to isolate for seven days but must:

- undertake daily Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT)
- wear a mask outside the home
- avoid high-risk settings, including hospitals, health care settings, disability and aged care facilities and correctional facilities
- work from home (where possible)
- avoid non-essential gatherings and contact with people at risk of severe illness
- should notify their employer/educational facility of their close contact status

What are the leave entitlements for staff who are unable to work due to self-isolation but are not sick?

Under WA's industrial relations system, if a permanent employee needs to self-isolate, but is not sick:

- There is no legal requirement for the employer to provide the employee with access to paid sick leave for the period of self-isolation or quarantine.
- You may wish to discuss working from home arrangements, if possible.
- You may allow them to access another form of paid leave (such as annual leave or long service leave) for the time they are unable to come to work.
- Using annual leave or long service leave must be mutually agreed by the employee and employer.
- Employees and employers can choose for a period of unpaid leave to be used.
- If the employee is not earning an income during the time they are isolating, they may be eligible for the COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment or the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.

Respond

Further Information

Testing and Isolation Protocol

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/covid-19-coronavirus-testing-and-isolation-guide>

Leave entitlements

(WA industrial relations system)

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/labour-relations/employment-impacted-covid-19-coronavirus>

What are the leave entitlements for staff that have family or household members with COVID-19?

Under the state and national industrial relations systems, if a permanent employee has to care for a family member with COVID-19:

- They are entitled to use accrued carer's leave.
- If your employee does not have carer's leave, you may allow them to access another form of paid leave (such as annual leave or long service leave) for the time they are unable to come to work. Using annual leave or long service leave must be mutually agreed by the employee and employer.
- Employees and employers can choose for a period of unpaid leave to be used.
- You may wish to discuss working from home arrangements – if possible.
- If the employee doesn't have paid leave, and is therefore not earning an income during the time they are isolating, they may be eligible for the [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#) via Service Australia or the [COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment](#).

Positive COVID-19 Case

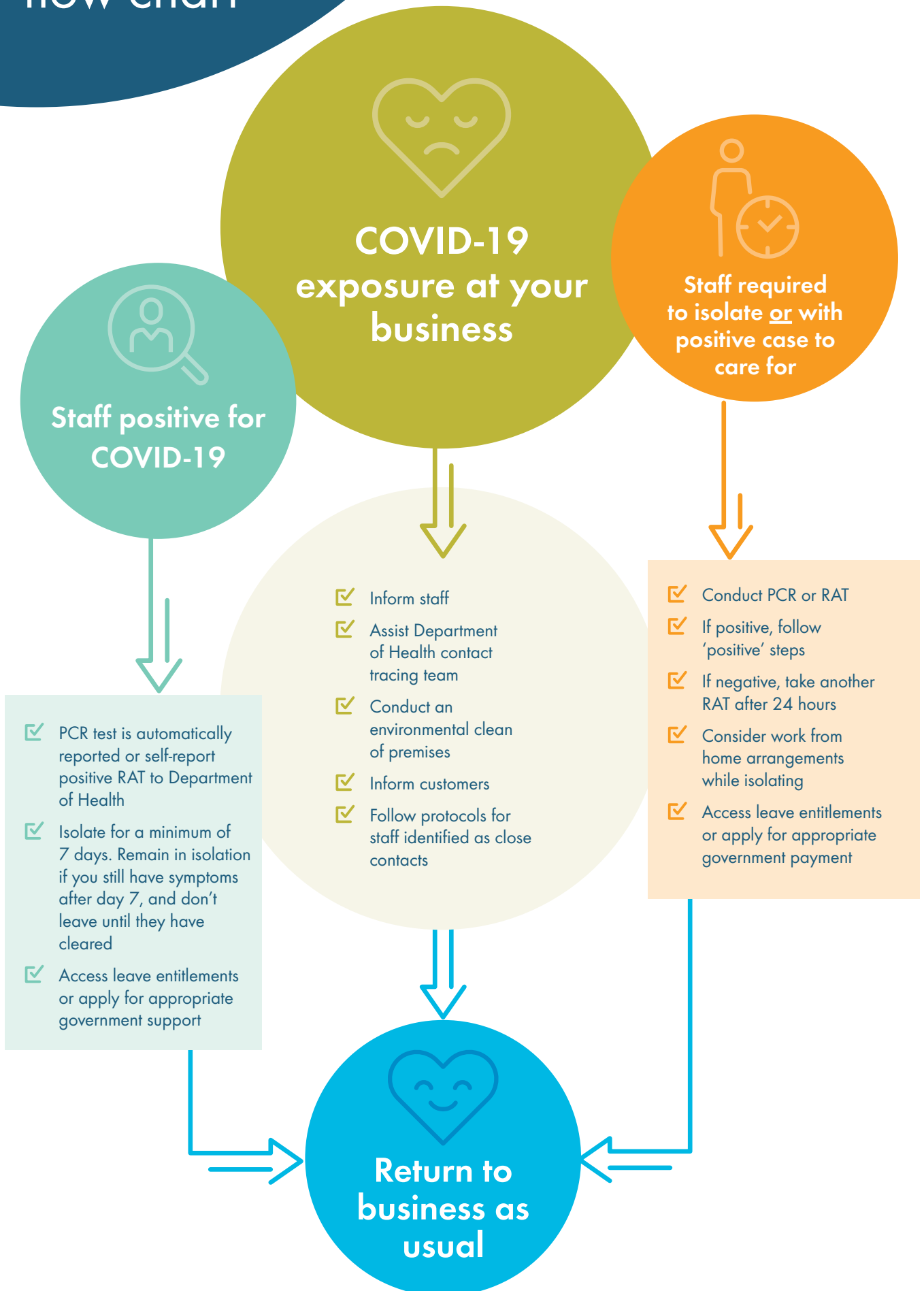
- If an individual tests positive for COVID-19 following a RAT, they are legally required to report positive RAT results to the [Department of Health online](#).
- PCR testing laboratories will notify the Department of Health if a positive test result is detected.
- People need to [isolate for a minimum of seven days](#) if they have tested positive to COVID-19.
- If symptoms are still present after seven days, they should continue isolating until symptoms clear.
- If symptoms have cleared, they may leave self-isolation and return to work. No testing is required.

What are the leave entitlements for staff that have COVID-19?

Under the state and national industrial relations systems, if a permanent employee has COVID-19 the following applies:

- Accrued paid sick leave can be taken.
- If a permanent employee has used all of their paid sick leave, you may allow them to access another form of paid leave (such as annual leave or long service leave) for the time they are unable to come to work.
- Using annual leave or long service leave must be mutually agreed by the employee and employer.
- Employees and employers can choose for a period of unpaid leave to be used.
- If the employee is not earning an income during the time they are isolating, they may be eligible for the [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#) via Service Australia.

Respond flow-chart



Appendix: Environmental Cleaning Guidelines

Environmental Cleaning means the thorough cleaning and disinfection of a public site that has potentially been exposed to virus that causes COVID-19. A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus.

Cleaning means the physical removal of germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution.

Disinfecting means using chemicals labelled as 'disinfectant' to kill germs on surfaces. Suitable disinfectants are those that contain alcohol in a concentration of at least 70 per cent, chlorine bleach in a concentration of 1000 parts per million, oxygen bleach, or wipes and sprays that contain quaternary ammonium compounds.

Step One: Gather equipment

- Any staff undertaking environmental cleaning must be provided with correct PPE. At a minimum, this should include level 2 surgical masks, gloves, gown/apron and protective eyewear.
- Alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) that contains between 60-80% alcohol and soap and water, for use when hands are visibly soiled, should also be provided.
- Cleaning equipment is to include:
 - Detergent and disinfectant products or two-in-one detergent/disinfectant products/wipes. Household or commercial grade disinfectant are suitable for use in workplaces that are not health care, beauty or allied health settings.
 - Disposable mop heads and disposable cleaning cloths (preferred). If you are unable to use disposable mops and cloths, then reusable mopheads and cloths can be used but should be laundered and allowed to completely dry after use.
 - Cleaning buckets that are emptied, cleaned, and disinfected with a fresh batch of cleaning and disinfectant solution and allowed to dry completely before reuse.
 - Plastic rubbish bags to line the rubbish bin for waste disposal.



Appendix: Environmental Cleaning Guidelines

Step Two: Cleaning and disinfecting

Preparation

- Always follow the manufacturer's usage and directions and consult the product safety data sheet (SDS).
- Choose appropriate cleaning solutions for the surfaces to be cleaned.
- Follow OSH procedures and never mix different cleaning products together.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase ventilation.
- Discard all consumables in the exposure area that cannot be cleaned and disinfected, for example opened toilet rolls or tissue boxes.

Hard surfaces

- Clean all hard surfaces that are frequently (multiple times per day) or minimally (once a day or less) touched, paying particular attention to shared workspaces, restrooms, staff changing rooms, gym equipment, horizontal surfaces such as tables, chairs and other frequently touched surfaces such as light switches, lift buttons, door handles or taps.
- You do not need to clean any surfaces that are never touched, such as ceilings and crevices in machinery.
- Wipe surfaces with detergent and warm water using a clean cloth. Allow the surface to completely dry then follow with a disinfectant, or use a cleaning product that contains both detergent and disinfectant properties.
- Wipe in an 'S' pattern from high to low and clean to dirtier areas, using one wipe or cloth per surface.
- Allow the surface to dry.

Electronic devices

- Electronic devices include computers, keyboards, EFTPOS machines and remotes.
- Turn the power off and unplug device if applicable.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfection products.
- If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of disinfectant wipes or alcohol-based wipes containing at least 70 per cent alcohol.
- Remove keyboard debris with a small vacuum cleaner fitting prior to cleaning and disinfecting.

Soft furnishings and fabrics

- Vacuum carpets - ideally with a vacuum cleaner fitted with a high-efficiency particulate absorbing (HEPA) filter.
- Steam cleaning may be used according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Launder fabric items if possible, using laundry detergent on the hottest possible temperature and according to the manufacturer's instructions then dried thoroughly.
- Clean and disinfect laundry after use.

Crockery and cutlery

- Clean in a commercial or domestic dishwasher using appropriate dishwasher detergent.
- If a dishwasher is not available, crockery and cutlery should be washed using hot water and dishwashing detergent.
- Allow to completely dry.

Appendix: Environmental Cleaning Guidelines

Step Three: Waste disposal

- Place all waste securely inside disposable rubbish bags, avoiding touching the inside of the bag.
- Do not overfill rubbish bags – ensure the bag can be tied closed and the contents do not overflow.
- Double bag if the contents are wet to prevent leaks.
- Place waste with other general waste in your routine waste collection.
- Perform hand hygiene after handling waste.
- Remove PPE safely by removing gloves by pulling down from cuffs and discarding. Masks should be removed and discarded touching the ties only, protective eyewear can be removed and discarded or disinfected. Perform hand hygiene after each step.

Step Four: Resume operations

Once environmental cleaning has been completed, normal operations can resume. You do not need a certificate of cleaning and disinfection to be issued to resume routine operations.

Further resources

<https://covid19.swa.gov.au/doc/how-clean-and-disinfect-your-workplace-covid-19>

https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/~/_media/Corp/Documents/Health-for/Infectious-disease/COVID19/TTIQ/Guidance-for-the-management-of-COVID-19-in-the-workplace.pdf