

Guideline for Implementation of Essential Visitor Process

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Background

We are now over two years into the COVID-19 pandemic and much has been learned during this period. To date the management of outbreaks and exposures in our facilities has been managed through lockdowns and restrictions to visiting, in line with Public Health Measures.

With the significant vaccination coverage in Australia, the progress of the booster vaccinations and the current dominance of Omicron the context of the Pandemic has changed. We are now able with Public Health guidance to move forward with less restrictions. The guidance allows us to balance the need to reduce transmission against the impact of social isolation and the resident's wellbeing.

During the pandemic we have been guided by the [Industry Code for Visiting](#) and our Public Health advice from our Public Health Units (PHU). On the 11th Feb the [CDNA Guidelines](#) were updated and on the 14th Feb [Managing Public Health Restrictions On Residential Aged Care Facilities – Interim Guidance](#) was released. These guides and the updated Industry Code for Visiting now allow us to have visitors enter our RACF's during outbreaks and exposures. Within these guides visitors are referred to as Essential Visitors or can be referred to as Partners in Care or Nominated Visitors.

We are adopting a set of requirements to ensure a Resident can be visited by one Essential Visitor. The Essential Visitor must:

- ✓ Complete Basic Infection Control training including use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- ✓ Comply with screening requirements including Rapid Antigen Testing with a negative result
- ✓ Be fully vaccinated in line with the Residential Aged Care Visitor Direction
- ✓ Comply with Infection control measures
- ✓ Restrict movement in the facility as per direction of the Manager or delegate
- ✓ Consider the risk posed to them

Process

All residents (existing and new) or their substitute decision maker are to be sent/provided a letter notifying them of the requirements and process for nominating their Essential Visitor. Once the Essential Visitor is nominated they are to be sent a letter confirming their nomination and the process they will need to follow. Not all residents may nominate an Essential Visitor but should be encouraged to do so.

The Manager must designate a trainer to deliver the training to the nominated Essential Visitor. This may be your IPC Lead or delegate. These face to face sessions can be delivered one on one or to a group.

Once an essential visitor has completed the training requirements they should then be identified in RMS as the nominated Essential Visitor. A report should be run when updates are made and given to the screening person to ensure that they are aware of the Essential Visitors.

Ensure all actions conversations and outcomes are documented in RMS.

Supporting Documentation

- Resident Letter – nomination of Essential Visitor
- Essential Visitor Letter – advising nomination and acceptance
- Training – Infection Control, Hand Hygiene, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Essential Visitor Declaration – completed and signed off by Manager and Essential Visitor

All documentation can be found at [Blue Care – UnitingCare | Covid-19 \(ucqccovid19.com.au\)](https://www.ucqccovid19.com.au)

During an outbreak or exposure, guidance from the Public Health Unit should be sought to confirm access to visitors. Any changes to visitation must be communicated by the facility.