

# Guidance for vulnerable facilities – developing a COVID-Safe Visit Procedure

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Vulnerable facilities are required to have a procedure for managing visits by diagnosed persons who are in isolation or during the post-isolation period, or symptomatic close contacts, in accordance with [Management of Diagnosed Cases of COVID-19 and Close Contacts Direction \(No.3\)](#). Visits are only permitted in exceptional circumstances, such as an end-of-life visit. Other circumstances require an [exemption](#).

The operator of the vulnerable facility should develop the procedure according to the facility-specific context and incorporating local risk assessment procedures and the facility's own medical or infection control advice.

**The following is best practice guidance for facility operators to consider in developing a COVID Safe Visit Procedure.**

Parts of the procedure should include the following:

## Assessment of the visit request

### Information that is required prior to approving a visit

- **Details of visitor(s)** – name, contact details, relationship to person being visited, and whether the visitor has symptoms of COVID-19.
- **Details of the critically ill patient or resident receiving the visit** – name, facility, location.
- **Details of proposed visit** – date and time of proposed visit and reasons given to support the request.
- The facility should determine that the **visit is necessary** and **meets the exceptional circumstance** of an **end-of-life** situation.

*For example:* the request may be confirmed by a medical officer, general practitioner, or nurse unit manager. The requirements of the *Information Privacy Act 2008* and other relevant legislation will be applied as relevant.

- The request to visit will be **considered by the operator** of the vulnerable facility or their delegate, who will decide to **grant the request or otherwise**.
- The facility operator should **undertake a risk assessment for each individual end-of-life visit, and if approved, should also specify the number and duration of visits permitted**.
- The facility operator should **keep a record** of all visits conducted under the COVID-Safe Visit Procedure.

# Visit management

## Logistics

- **Suitable locations in the facility** for COVID-Safe visits to be conducted should be identified, to ensure the protection of other vulnerable persons.

*For example:* options may include a single patient or resident bedroom, another single room, a negative pressure room, or an outdoors or a fresh air location such as a garden or verandah.

- Identify how other patients or residents will be managed if the person being visited is in a shared room, such as through relocation.
- The room or location should be **cleaned and disinfected immediately after the visit** has been completed.
- An **outdoors or fresh air location is desirable** if appropriate, taking into consideration such factors as the health of the persons involved and weather.
- Approved **visitors should be advised of the requirements** to comply with this procedure **in advance** of their scheduled visit.
- An appropriately trained and experienced member of **staff** will **supervise the visit**.
- The **number of visitors** permitted in a single visit is at the discretion of the facility, noting the need to maintain physical distancing between the visitors and other vulnerable persons, and avoiding crowding or congregating.

## Preparation for the visit

- The supervising member of staff should put on **PPE (including P2/N95 mask and eye protection)** prior to meeting the visitor.
- The supervising member of staff wearing a P2/N95 mask and eye protection should meet the visitor at a **pre-arranged arrival point** - if possible main entrances should be avoided.

*For example:* the visitor will phone the facility upon their arrival, be met outside the facility and after attending to hand hygiene and PPE, be escorted to the location of the visit, with a route through the facility identified that minimises contact with other people, including other vulnerable persons.

- The visitor should be asked to sanitise their hands prior to entering the facility, be provided with alcohol-based hand sanitiser and be reminded to **practice good hand hygiene throughout the visit**.
- The staff member will request the visitor attend to hand hygiene and provide a **flat surgical mask** for the visitor to put on, provide instruction and observe that the mask is correctly worn, and advise the visitor not to touch their mask once it is in place.
- The **mask needs to be 'well-fitted'**, meaning it **covers the nose and mouth and conforms well to the face**. If necessary, the staff member should verbally instruct the visitor to bend the nose wire and to adjust the mask and observe that the mask is well-fitted.
- Follow any other facility specific requirements as determined by the facility operator.

- Facility staff should prepare the patient/resident for the visit, relocating to a single room or other location if necessary.
- The supervising member of staff should **escort the visitor(s) to the visit location** by a route through the facility that minimises contact with other people, including other vulnerable persons.
- The visitor(s) should be reminded to **remain at least 1.5 metres** from others at all times, excluding the person they are visiting.
- If a visitor requires the use of a bathroom, the supervising member of staff should ensure that no others use the bathroom until it has been cleaned and disinfected appropriately.

## Visit arrangements

- The **visit duration** is at the discretion of the operator of the facility.  
*For example:* a maximum period of 1 - 2 hours will minimise the risk that the visitor will need to remove the mask for any reason or use the bathroom.
- The **visitor should not leave the location of the visit** or enter any other part of the facility, unless instructed to do so by the supervising staff member.
- If the patient or resident required nursing, medical or personal care during the visit, the visitor(s) should be asked to wait in the patient's or resident's bathroom or be taken to a separate location until the care is complete.
- The door of the room should remain closed for the duration of the visit.
- A period of private time between the visitor and the patient or resident may be considered at the discretion of the supervising member of staff.
- Removal of the mask by the visitor to eat or drink should generally not be permitted.

## Completion of the visit

- When the visit is complete the member of staff should **escort the visitor(s) to the exit location**.
- The visitor should be supervised while they remove their mask and place in a waste bin in accordance with the facility's **waste management arrangements** and **sanitise their hands prior to departure**. The staff member should keep mask on during this process and maintain a minimum 1.5m distance. This would ideally occur in an outside area.
- Details of the **visit should be recorded** by the facility consistent with local procedure.