|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Policy No: 4.26 | Policy Name: **COVID-19 Safety** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Applies to: | Version: |
| Specific responsibility: | Date Approved: |
|  | Review Date: |

# Purpose

This policy outlines how [Service Name] manages workplace health and safety risks presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this policy is to provide the highest level of protection possible to staff and others against harm to their health and safety.

# Policy statement

In line with guidance provided by Safe Work NSW[[1]](#footnote-1), [Service Name] aspires to provide the highest level of protection possible to staff and others against harm to their health and safety presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. [Service Name] is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for workers, clients and visitors by following the public health orders and by following established infection control practices that are provided by the NSW Department of Health. By following expert health advice and direction, [Service Name] seeks to protect staff, clients and the broader community that it operates within from the risk of infection with COVID-19.

# References

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)

# Definitions

**COVID-19[[2]](#footnote-2):**

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.

Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. People should protect themselves and others from infection by washing hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently and by not touching the face.

The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it’s important that people also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow).

**Physical or social distancing[[3]](#footnote-3):**

Physical or social distancing means reducing the close physical contact between people and staying 1.5 metres away from people (not living in the same household).

People living in the same household do not need to be 1.5 meters from each other.

Premises should consider how they can allow people on the premises to practice physical or social distancing in their COVID-19 Safety Plans.

# Procedure

[Service name] will adhere to the public health orders currently enacted and the [manager] will review these orders on a daily basis (Monday – Friday).

## COVID-19 Safety Plans

[Service name] is committed to getting back to work while protecting the community and preventing the spread of COVID-19. This includes:

* developing a COVID-19 Safety Plan
* accessing a QR code and business resources online
* providing a contact person for [Service name] in recognition of [Service name] being a COVID Safe business
* having a plan if [Service name] is linked to a COVID-19 case.

Information about COVID-19 Safety Plans are located on the following website: [COVID Safe | NSW Government](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/covid-safe)

## Working from the [Service name] office (no lockdown)

[Service name] will manage the risks presented by the COVID-19 pandemic by applying the following range of strategies:

### Employees:

* [Service name] employees must not work when they are unwell, especially if exhibiting any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19, including:
  + fever (37.5 degrees Celsius or higher)[[4]](#footnote-4)
  + cough
  + sore throat
  + shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
  + runny nose
  + loss of taste
  + loss of smell.

Other reported symptoms include:

* + fatigue
  + acute blocked nose (congestion)
  + muscle pain
  + joint pain
  + headache
  + diarrhoea
  + nausea / vomiting
  + loss of appetite.

Unexplained chest pain and conjunctivitis (eye infection) have also been reported as symptoms of COVID-19.

In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia with severe acute respiratory distress.

* [Service name] employees are required to get tested for COVID-19 if they exhibit any of the associated symptoms. They must self-isolate and not return to work until they have received a negative result to this test
* [Service name] are encouraged to download and activate the COVID Safe app on their phone
* [Service name] must follow all government restrictions in place at the time in relation to COVID-19.

When in the workplace, [Service name] staff are required to follow a range of infection control strategies, including:

* follow hygiene guidelines including frequent handwashing and/or sanitising, coughing / sneezing into elbows etc. at all times
* maintain physical or social distancing at all times including meal breaks and when entering / exiting the office
* avoid gathering in groups
* keep to assigned workstations whenever possible
* avoid sharing equipment such as phones, pens etc.
* wipe down communal surfaces such as reception areas, meeting rooms, lunchrooms etc. with disinfectant on a regular basis
* wear disposable gloves when wiping down any shared surfaces.

The following additional strategies will also be implemented and reviewed on an ongoing basis:

* [Service name] employees are encouraged to work from home when possible
* [Service name] employees are encouraged to minimise contact with each other
* Face to face meetings have been suspended during the pandemic and platforms such as phone, Zoom and MS Teams are used as an alternative.

### Client and office visitors:

* Clients and other stakeholders are currently encouraged to contact [Service name] via the telephone or electronically and are encouraged to not visit the office
* Any visitors to the office are to be screened by [Service name] staff before allowing entry by checking they:
  + are not unwell or exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19; and/or
  + are not awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test; and/or
  + have not been in contact with anyone who has tested positive; and/or
  + have not been in a COVID-19 area of concern in the previous 14 days.
* [Service name] employees are to wipe down all surfaces after meeting with visitors in the office or common areas.

## Working from home (lockdown)

[Service name] has developed systems to assist staff to work from home when there is a lockdown in their area.

This includes the [manager]:

* providing staff with equipment (laptops, phones etc.) to be able to set up a workstation at home
* providing staff with the following checklist to ensure the workstation at home is safe: [Working-from-home-workplace-checklist.pdf (nsw.gov.au)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/Working-from-home-workplace-checklist.pdf)
* maintaining daily contact with staff either individually and/or as a group via teleconference or Zoom / MS Teams session
* encourage employees to maintain regular contact with each other
* ensuring staff are aware how to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
* ensuring staff are aware how to undertake their work role and individual tasks whilst working from home and provide guidance on how to modify their tasks so they can be completed from home
* informing staff how they can submit their timesheets and apply for leave
* checking that staff are completing their daily tasks
* referring to the NSW Governments *Working from home guidance for employers* for further information if/when required: [Working from home guidance for employers | NSW Government](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/safe-workplaces/employers/working-from-home)

## Engaging with clients

[Service Name] is committed to supporting its client group during stressful times and appreciates the disruption that COVID-19 has brought to both individuals and the communities they live in.

Clients who present to [Service Name] seeking assistance will be engaged with outside the service as an initial assessment is undertaken of their health and wellbeing. [Service Name] is committed to supporting the work health and safety of all people who present to the service and have clear information displayed at all service entrances identifying the requirement to be double vaccinated to enter into the premises. Every effort will be made to support clients whilst maintaining work health and safety practice.

# Related documents

Work Health and Safety Policy

# Review

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reviewing and approving this policy** | | |
| Frequency | Person responsible | Approval |
| [How often will this policy be reviewed] | [Position of person responsible for reviewing policy] | [position of person/group who approves this policy] |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Policy review and version tracking** | | | |
| Review | Date approved | Approved by | Next review date |
| 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |

1. [Safe Work NSW - COVID-19](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/COVID-19-Coronavirus) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Coronavirus (who.int)](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Physical distancing | NSW Government](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/rules/changes/social-distancing) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [Symptoms and testing | NSW Government](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/health-and-wellbeing/symptoms-and-testing) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)