

## COVID-19 – Managing a confirmed case or close contact in the workplace

### Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance and support to managers and supervisors on the appropriate management of and response to a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the workplace.

### Scope

This procedure applies to all managers and supervisors in the event that an employee is confirmed by a health authority as a [confirmed case](#) or [close contact](#) of a confirmed COVID-19 case.

This procedure does **not** apply to [casual contacts](#). Casual contacts do not need to be excluded from work or school while feeling well (as at 14 March 2020). Casual contacts will need to monitor their health for 14 days and seek immediate medical advice if they become unwell during that period.

### 1. Notification

When an employee advises that they are a *close contact* or *confirmed case* of COVID-19 as confirmed by a health authority:

1. Gather as much information as possible, including but not limited to:
  - Which health authority confirmed their status i.e. Public Health Unit, GP, hospital.
  - What quarantine/isolation period they have been prescribed.
  - Whether they have any concerns e.g. leave, finance, support.
  - Ask the employee to provide a copy of the medical certificate, self-quarantine order at their earliest convenience.
2. Immediately notify your Manager and contact the COVID-19 Incident Management Team (IMT) on 3810 8199 or [COVID19@ipswich.qld.gov.au](mailto:COVID19@ipswich.qld.gov.au).
3. Work Health and Safety will notify the West Moreton Public Health Unit (WMPHU) on 3818 4700.
  - This is only required if WMPHU was not involved in the employee's diagnosis.
  - Advice provided by the WMPHU must be complied with.
  - Take a record of any advice provided by the WMPHU.

4. Email all information to [COVID19@ipswich.qld.gov.au](mailto:COVID19@ipswich.qld.gov.au) as soon as possible.
5. If the employee hasn't already been advised by a health authority, advise them that they will have to go home to serve out the isolation/self-quarantine period.

## 2. Isolation

If an employee receives confirmation that they are a *close contact* or *confirmed case* while they are at work, follow the direction of WMPHU (if provided) and:

1. Ask the employee to gather their personal belongings (handbag, mobile phone, keys, wallet etc.).
2. Discreetly guide the employee to an outdoor location while maintaining 1.5 metres distance where possible.
  - Open doors and press lift buttons on behalf of the employee where required.
  - Isolation indoors is not recommended due to increased cleaning requirements and risk of transmission to those who will need to use the room later.
3. Remain with the employee while they return to their vehicle or are collected by another transport means.
  - Contact Workplace Safety & Wellbeing or the COVID-19 hotline (extension 8199) for advice if the employee commutes to work via public transport, requires another person to transport them home or needs to collect children.
  - Do not transport the staff member yourself.
4. Once the employee has left the workplace, conduct a discreet investigation to determine the following and report to the COVID-19 IMT:
  - How many colleagues does the employee work with;
  - What type of contact has there been in the workgroup e.g. casual, face to face; and
  - What type of social distancing was occurring in the workgroup.
5. Ensure the employee's immediate workgroup does not have close contact with other workgroups or employees until advice is obtained from WMPHU.
  - Liaise with your General Manager and the COVID-19 IMT regarding potential standing down of the workgroup pending advice from WMPHU.

## 3. Cleaning

Notification to the COVID-19 IMT of a *confirmed case* will trigger activation of the cleaning team. The cleaning team will undertake a Level 2 clean of the employee's immediate work area i.e. desk

in accordance with the *Department of Health Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for COVID-19* and the Safe Work Instruction for a Level 2 clean.

1. Advise team members not to touch the workspace of the confirmed case/close contact until after the Level 2 clean has been completed.

### **Routine environmental cleaning**

Anyone can undertake routine cleaning of their work areas as follows:

1. Don nitrile gloves and use a disposable cloth and cleaning detergent solution to clean frequently touched surfaces in the general work area such as door handles, light switches, buttons in lifts etc.
  - This solution is also suitable for cleaning desks and work areas.

## **4. Work and leave arrangements**

Leave and working arrangements for all confirmed cases and close contacts will be managed on a case by case basis. It is important to work together with the employee, their health professional and the People and Culture Branch to determine whether work from home arrangements are appropriate in line with the approved arrangements.

## **5. Team Communication**

It's important to note that most people will feel some distress during a crisis – this is normal, and usually resolves naturally within a matter of days or weeks.

1. It is important that communication with team members is timely and transparent.
  - While an employee's personal health information should not be shared, it should be acknowledged with the team that the employee has been sent home due to being a *confirmed case* or *close contact* (as relevant).
  - Team members should be advised of what actions have been taken to support the employee.
  - Team members should be advised of what actions they can take to keep themselves safe i.e. cleaning and what support is available to them i.e. employee assistance program.
2. It is important to acknowledge that some team members may feel scared, overwhelmed, worried and/or anxious, and to respond to these concerns with compassion.
  - It may help to remind teams that COVID-19 is not airborne, meaning they are not at risk simply from being in the same work area as a confirmed case.
2. This event is likely to be protracted and it's important to keep an eye on your team members' behaviours and stress levels over time and offer support as required.

- Queensland Health has developed advice for [looking after your mental wellbeing during a crisis](#), as well as [keeping up your spirits and reducing boredom while in self-quarantine](#).

## 6. Support

Home isolation or quarantine periods can be stressful, boring and lonely.

1. It is important to check in regularly with staff whether they are working from home or in quarantine/isolation.
  - Establish a regular frequency, time and channel for checking in with the employee and commit to this.
  - While it is normal to feel concerned during an event like this, if the employee indicates they are particularly concerned or distressed, encourage them to access the [Employee Assistance Program](#), talk to a counsellor or other mental health professional.
  - If the employee is a casual contact and has developed symptoms, direct them to see a doctor immediately. Remember to check in with them afterward.
2. If the employee is working from home, consider how you will maintain the team culture.
  - Whether the employee is a *confirmed case* or a *close contact*, they should still be included in all communications that they would usually be a part of.
  - Regular team meetings and briefings should be conducted using tele- or video conference to ensure that the employee can still participate as a member of the team.

## 7. Return to work

Return to work should be managed in consultation with the employee.

1. Employees who were *confirmed cases* are to obtain medical clearance prior to returning to work.
  - If the employee is unable to obtain medical clearance e.g. due to unwillingness of GPs or unavailability of testing, escalate immediately to the COVID-19 Incident Management Team for management on a case by case basis.
2. Employees who were *close contacts* and have completed their 14 day home isolation or quarantine period without showing signs or symptoms of being unwell, are permitted to return to work without a medical certificate.

- However, if the employee underwent testing during this period or in relation to being identified as a *close contact* they will be required to obtain medical clearance prior to returning to work.
3. Discuss with the employee how they would like their return to work handled.
- Some employees might like to celebrate their return, others may prefer not to draw attention to themselves, some employees may be happy to field questions from team members where others will prefer privacy.
  - Ensure the team is briefed on the employee’s preferences prior to their return to ensure this is respected.
4. It’s important to address social stigma surrounding COVID-19; how we communicate about the virus is critical in supporting affected employees.
- This can be done by showing empathy for those affected, creating an open and honest environment for discussion of the disease and its impact.
  - The World Health Organisation has developed [Do’s and Don’ts on language when talking about COVID-19](#) which will help managers have supportive and respectful conversations about the virus.

## Definitions

Term	Definition	Source
<b>Confirmed case</b>	A person with laboratory confirmation of infection with the COVID-19 virus.	<a href="#">World Health Organisation Global surveillance for COVID-19 (dated 27 February)</a>
<b>Close contact</b>	A person who has had greater than 15 minutes face-to-face contact in any setting with a confirmed case in the period extending from 24 hours before onset of symptoms in the confirmed case;  or  A person who has shared a closed space with a confirmed case for a prolonged period (e.g. more than 2 hours) in the period extending from 24 hours before onset of symptoms in the confirmed case.	<a href="#">CDNA Guidelines (dated 21 March)</a>
<b>Casual contact</b>	A person who has shared a closed space with a confirmed case for less than 2 hours or has had less than 15 minutes face –to-face contact in any setting with a confirmed case in the 24 hours before onset of symptoms.	<a href="#">Department of Health Information for Casual Contacts Fact Sheet (version 2, 6 March)</a>