Keeping your business
COVID Smart

As we transition to living with COVID-19, it is important for workplaces to remain COVID Smart in their operations and continue to uphold their work health and safety obligations.

COVID-19 will continue to be part of our community which may lead to fluctuations in the number of COVID-19 cases over time. While public health restrictions have eased, it is important that businesses and workplaces are prepared for increases in COVID-19 cases and the potential impacts.

This document provides advice for maintaining a COVID Smart workplace.

Employer responsibilities

Employers have a legal responsibility under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* to remove or minimise risks to health and safety, so far as reasonably practicable. This includes risks related to the transmission and spread of COVID-19.

For more advice visit WorkSafe ACT.

COVID Smart behaviours

COVID Smart behaviours are the simple actions you may already have in place that keep your business and the community safe.

COVID Smart behaviours are everyone's responsibility. Individuals are responsible for protecting themselves and each other by:

» staying home if unwell and getting tested for COVID-19

» remaining up-to-date with vaccinations

» Wearing a face mask when entering public indoor settings or where it is difficult to maintain physical distancing, including for example on public transport.

» practising good hand and respiratory hygiene

» practising physical distancing in public places

Many of these actions also help protect individuals and businesses from other illnesses that circulate in our community.

Workplaces should ensure that their employees are familiar with and are encouraged to follow COVID Smart behaviours while at work.

ACT Government

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Go to covid19.act.gov.au

Risk Assessment

Workplaces should conduct risk assessments and implement controls to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace.

Risk assessments may include the type, length and frequency of interactions in the workplace, and if employees or clients are likely to be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

For more information visit WorkSafe ACT.

Safe Work Australia also provides advice about conducting risk assessments and implementing control measures.

Employees who test positive to COVID-19

Workplaces should develop policies on how to manage the return to work of an employee who tests positive for COVID-19 and communicate these with staff.

People who have tested positive for COVID-19 are strongly recommended to stay at home and minimise their contact with others until their COVID-19 symptoms have gone and they are feeling much better. Workplaces may wish to consider suitable alternatives to face-to-face attendance where possible, including work from home arrangements, if staff are well enough to do so.

If a person tests positive for COVID-19, they may be infectious for up to 10 days, but are most infectious in the two days just before symptoms start and while they have acute symptoms (runny nose, sore throat, cough and fever).

To reduce the risk to others, it is recommended that a person diagnosed with COVID-19:

» stay home until acute symptoms have resolved.

» if they must leave the house, wear a mask when indoors and on public transport.

» avoid large gatherings and indoor crowded places.

» not visit people at high risk of severe illness, anyone in hospital, or an aged or disability care facility for at least 7 days.

» talk to their employer about when to return to the workplace.

Employees who work in certain high-risk settings may be eligible for financial support if they are unable to work due to COVID-19. Further information is available from Services Australia.

Employees who are exposed to COVID-19 in their home

Workplaces should consider how to manage workplace attendance for employees who live with someone who has recently been diagnosed with COVID-19.

People living with someone who has COVID-19 are at the highest risk of getting COVID-19, and may transmit COVID-19 during their infectious period, which is from 2 days before they started having symptoms or tested positive (whichever came first).

Household contacts of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 should be aware that they are at increased risk of getting COVID-19. There are simple steps they can take to reduce the risk to others:

» monitor closely for COVID-19 symptoms

» stay home and get tested for COVID-19 if any symptoms develop

» Avoid visiting people at high risk of severe illness or in a hospital or aged or disability care facility

» wear a mask when in indoor spaces outside of the home and on public transport

» regular COVID-19 testing with a rapid antigen test.

Workplaces should consider the advice they provide to household contacts and what policies they may wish to implement.

COVID Safety Plan

Maintaining a COVID Safety Plan is no longer a public health requirement in the ACT. Workplaces are encouraged to document their risk mitigation controls in a COVID Safety Plan and share this information with employees.

The COVID Safety Plan Guidance fro Business, available from the ACT Government business site, can help to you develop a plan.

If your workplace already has a COVID Safety Plan, you are encouraged to:

» update, maintain and use it

» consult with employees so they are aware of their responsibilities

A COVID Safety Plan should include measures to:

» implement a policy requiring workers to stay away from the workplace if they are unwell and not fit for work. Encourage them to seek medical advice as appropriate. encourage physical distancing

» provide hand sanitiser and handwashing facilities to encourage and ensure good hand hygiene practices

» encourage the use of face masks and other personal protective equipment, in particular for recently recovered cases or household contacts

» undertake regular cleaning and disinfecting

» display COVID Smart signage

» conduct regular check-ins and training for employees on COVID Smart behaviours.

Planning for illness

Workplaces should maintain business continuity planning for when their workplace is impacted by COVID-19. Consider how your business will manage the risk of infectious illnesses, including COVID-19, and high absence levels.

Encourage workers to be aware of COVID-19 symptoms and to not attend work while unwell and follow public health advice. Acting quickly may reduce the risk of illness spreading.

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Workplaces should encourage employees to maintain COVID Smart behaviours outlined above, including staying home if unwell.

Some workplaces may wish to consider maintaining an outbreak plan. This is particularly important for high-risk settings.

Further information

» ACT COVID-19 website

» ACT Government business site: Home | Business Hub (act.gov.au)

» Safe Work Australia: Welcome | Safe Work Australia

» WorkSafe ACT: Home | WorkSafe ACT

Accessibility

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If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call **13 14 50**.

For accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

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