

Assisting children and young people in residential OOHC to limit the spread of COVID-19



The risk mitigation strategies provided in this factsheet can be used by staff to assist children and young people in residential OOHC settings who are currently unaffected by the COVID-19 virus to limit the potential spread of the virus in shared households.

Action	Risk Mitigation Strategies
1. Implement Safe Hygiene Practices	<p>Encourage children and young people in the house to cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue (or into their elbow) and immediately dispose of used tissues in a rubbish bin.</p> <p>If possible, provide young people with a cleaning pack so they feel empowered to clean their own room.</p> <p>Encourage them to wash their hands regularly, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upon entering and leaving the premises • after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing • after using the bathroom • before eating • before and after the use of cooking utensils e.g. cutlery, dishes, glasses. (All tableware to go through the dishwasher if available) <p>Include safe hygiene practices in the daily planner.</p>
2. Stagger Shower/Bathroom Access	<p>Create staggered use/time for shower and bathroom facilities to prevent young people wanting to use the facilities at the same time.</p>
3. Employ Physical Distancing	<p>Use online activities instead of in-person group activities where possible.</p> <p>Remind young people to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres between one another and staff members where possible (noting that this will not always be possible within the environment of a small house).</p> <p>Discourage congregation in common areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schedules for the use of common areas could be used <p>If required to transport young people, transport less people per trip and ensure that passengers have more space between one another.</p> <p>It is important to explain to young people and staff why certain people might need to be self-isolated from others to avoid stigmatising those who are affected.</p>
4. Encourage Young People to Stay at Home	<p>Strongly encourage young people to stay at home. Everyone is asked to follow the Stay at Home rules unless in the case of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work (where you can't work remotely) • shop for food and essentials • medical care or supplies • exercise

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The advice in this fact sheet has been taken from the *Guidelines: Residential Care Settings for Young People in Out of Home Care (OOHC) and COVID-19*, prepared by the Department of Communities and Justice, in consultation with ACWA and an expert group of service providers, and the Australian Services Union (ASU).

Action	Risk Mitigation Strategies
<p>4. Encourage Young People to Stay at Home</p> <p>cont...</p>	<p>Where appropriate, allocate dedicated times for young people to leave the house (e.g. in the case of getting fresh air/exercise/personal space), under strict advice to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain 1.5m distance from all other people they encounter • avoid touching their face • avoid touching any high touch surfaces (e.g. press traffic light with elbow rather than hand) • wash their hands immediately on return • wipe down any items they may have purchased/acquired/touched whilst out of the home e.g. mobile phone, food products <p>Give young people some leeway (within the constraints of NSW Health advice) to maintain their personal freedom, this may alleviate tension and prevent absconding.</p>
<p>5. Ensure Staff have documentation to Enable them to Drive Young People About</p>	<p>Staff should be provided with relevant documentation (including where possible digital IDs) which will identify them to police, demonstrating that they are essential workers.</p> <p>At times there will be a need for staff to take young person(s) for a drive—particularly when this is part of a young person’s therapeutic plan.</p> <p>Each house vehicle should have a letter in the glovebox detailing emergency contacts as well as a copy of the public health order.</p>

More information can be found in the *Guidelines: Residential Care Settings for Young People in Out of Home Care (OOHC) and COVID-19*. E.g. Appendix 3: Handwashing Technique and **Fact Sheet 5: How to manage a suspected case of COVID-19 in a young person**.