

# Additional considerations for children and young people with disability



This factsheet provides advice for staff about the additional considerations when supporting children and young people with disability in residential OOHc settings during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

The following safety precautions should be considered when working with a child or young person with disability:

Consideration	General Mitigation Strategies
1. Young people with a disability may require more high contact interaction with staff	<p>More interaction may present a challenge to the 1.5m proximity boundary. It is particularly important that safety protocols such as frequent and thorough hand washing are observed when supporting these young people.</p> <p>Staff members interacting with these young people may need to be limited to a small number of dedicated staff (i.e. that staff member should avoid interaction with other young people in the home where possible, and strictly adhere to infection control procedures).</p> <p>The staff member should consider the use of PPE if a young person's care needs and/or unpredictable behaviour has an impact on the ability to maintain adequate physical distancing and the young person develops respiratory symptoms.</p> <p>Continue to use existing PPE strategies for young people who have spitting behaviours and consider the need for additional PPE if the young person develops respiratory symptoms.</p>
2. Booklet to assist having a conversation about the virus	<p>Staff can utilise the children's book called "Hi. This is Coronavirus" on the <a href="#">Health website</a> to assist conversations with young people with an intellectual disability to understand the virus.</p>
3. Use of other resources	<p>National Disability Insurance Scheme: <a href="#">Easy Read – Coronavirus (COVID-19) information</a></p> <p>Council for Intellectual Disability: <a href="#">Staying Safe from Coronavirus</a></p> <p>Down Syndrome Australia: <a href="#">Easy Read – Coronavirus fact sheet</a></p> <p>Access Easy English: <a href="#">COVID-19 – What do I do?</a></p> <p>Healthy Literacy Hub: <a href="#">COVID-19 Information</a></p>

The following steps should be taken to manage a suspected case of a young person with disability:

Consideration	Actions for Suspected and Confirmed Cases
1. Weigh up the risks	<p>Providers need to weigh the risks to staff and other young people versus the benefit of keeping a confirmed COVID-19 high needs/ high touch care (e.g. support bathing) for a young person in the home setting.</p> <p>At the time of considering testing, reach out for paediatric/public health advice to consider what would be the threshold for admission to hospital.</p> <p>If a young person needs to be moved to another house, frame it as an 'alternative activity space' with this cohort, instead of isolation, particularly in the case of intellectual disabilities.</p>

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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).

Consideration	Actions for Suspected and Confirmed Cases
2. Where advised to keep young person in a residential setting	<p>Where possible, strictly limit the number of staff working on rotation with a suspected case.</p> <p>Staff members working with this individual should not work with other young people.</p> <p>Ensure staff working with suspected case have full PPE required at all times of interaction.</p> <p>Continue to take extra precautions such as frequent hand washing (as well as wearing gloves).</p>
3. Make a highly regulated routine	<p>A highly regulated routine is particularly necessary for many young people in this cohort. With changes to routine as community access/school routines have changed, a behavioural spike can be expected. Staff should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expect to employ approved restrictive practices (medication as prescribed or active restriction e.g. knives in kitchen)</li> <li>• Ensure compliance with NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission practice standards on restrictive practices as well as a young person's Behaviour Support Plan, as well as any reporting requirements against these</li> <li>• Document routines in detail for staff handover</li> <li>• Use activity planners to provide sense of routine</li> </ul>
4. Admission to Care	<p>For both confirmed and suspected cases, early consideration should be given to admission to care for high contact confirmed cases.</p>

This fact sheet should be read alongside **Fact Sheet 4: Preventing the spread of COVID-19**; **Fact Sheet 5: How to Manage a suspected COVID-19 case in a young person**; and **Fact Sheet 6: How to Manage a confirmed COVID-19 case in a young person**.

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