



CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for carers

27 June 2020

Table of contents

What do I need to know about current restrictions and requirements in place?	3
Will I still receive support and visits from Anglicare Victoria staff during this pandemic?	3
If the child in my care is sick, can I still take them to the doctors or hospital?.....	4
How can I support children with complex needs?.....	4
What if someone in my household has COVID-19? What about the child in my care?	5
Is respite care still available to my family/household?	5
Can children still see their birth families during this pandemic?.....	5
What other supports will be provided for carers during the COVID-19 pandemic?	6

Thank you for your commitment to supporting children in your care during this challenging time. The Australian and Victorian Governments are working around the clock with international agencies to respond to the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and to keep the Victorian community safe. For further information and to keep up to date with the latest information, please refer to:

[The Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services advice](#)

[The Australian Government Department of Health advice](#)

[Better Health Victoria](#)

[World Health Organisation](#)

What do I need to know about current restrictions and requirements in place?

For information about Victoria's restriction levels, including additional restrictions in some areas of the State, visit the [DHHS website](#).

Requirements for face coverings have come into effect from 11:59pm on Wednesday 22 July 2020.

People aged 12 years and over residing in areas where Stage 3 restrictions apply are required to wear a face covering when leaving home for one of the four permitted reasons: shopping for food and supplies, outdoor exercise and recreation, medical care and caregiving, and study or work. Face coverings are not required in the foster or kinship carer's home unless someone is confirmed as having coronavirus (COVID-19).

Children under the age of 12 and older primary school students are not required to wear face coverings.

Children and young people aged 12 years and over in restricted areas will need to wear face coverings, unless a lawful excuse or exception applies.

Face coverings are legally required should you enter Stage 3 restricted areas. Wearing a face covering in areas outside of metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire where Stage 2 restrictions apply is recommended for people aged 12 years and over, if you leave your home and are not able to keep 1.5 metres away from others.

Further information about the updated restrictions is available at the [DHHS website](#).

If you have any queries in relation to a child in your care that may be impacted by the restrictions, speak to your Anglicare Victoria case worker.

Will I still receive support and visits from Anglicare Victoria staff during this pandemic?

Yes. Foster and kinship carers will continue to receive support and supervision from an allocated Anglicare Victoria case worker. You will continue to be supported through care team meetings as well. Wherever possible, the team at Anglicare will engage with you and the children in your care via telephone, Skype, and online video calling platforms. However, we understand that there will be times that face to face contact will be required to ensure we are supporting you, and meeting the needs of the children in your care and the program. In these instances, we have developed safe and flexible practices to ensure we are able to visit your household safely.

The child in my care is upset and anxious about Coronavirus. How can I support them?

It is likely some children will be aware of this situation. To help support children in your care ensure you are:

- Talking to them about facts of the virus and provide them information in a way that is age appropriate for the children in your care. You may need to approach this in

- different ways for different age groups including the use of technology
- Aware of your own behaviour as children easily pick up cues from the environment and adults around them and may further cause anxiety.
- Checking in with them and their feelings. This is vital to ensure they are being listened to and to help them process and express how they are feeling.
- Able to have a break from online activities and ongoing news. This is an opportunity to create more family time to cook together or play board games.

For information about how to have a safe and reassuring conversation with the child in your care about coronavirus (COVID-19), visit [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for parents, carers and guardians](#)

There are a range of organisations providing counselling and support for young people experiencing stress and anxiety. More information about mental health issues and anxiety, including youth focused support services, can be found at [Mental health resources – coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Will the children still need to go day care or school?

The day care centre or school will communicate with you directly the status of the school being open or closed. Victorian government schools in areas under Stage 3 restrictions have moved to remote and flexible learning, however there are exceptions to this for vulnerable children including those in OOHC. This is best discussed with your case worker and the child's school.

If you have questions about learning from home, you can continue to call DET's advice phone line for parents and carers on 1800 338 663.

The Department of Education and Training has information and resources to support parents and carers. For general information, key dates and learning from home resources visit:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/learning/Pages/home-learning.aspx>

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/Pages/coronavirus-advice-parents.aspx>

For up-to-date information on Kindergarten services visit the Department of Education's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for early childhood services webpage](#). Contact your kindergarten or other early childhood service to find out what their current operating arrangements are, or visit the Department of Education's [Emergency closures webpage](#)

If the child in my care is sick, can I still take them to the doctors or hospital?

You can still access these essential services for your children if they are sick and require immediate health attention. Contact your GP for an appointment or in an emergency, call 000. Please ensure you are aware of medical centre or hospital safety requirements for infection control. If you are concerned that you, or a child in your care are exhibiting symptoms of Coronavirus, please call the Department of Health and Human Services dedicated coronavirus line on 1800 675 398.

How can I support children with complex needs?

Ensure you communicate with the team at Anglicare about any concerns you may have to ensure you are set up with the right support for you and your household. Ensure you have detailed advice from child's doctor to keep them safe especially as some children may be vulnerable to COVID-19.

What if someone in my household has COVID-19? What about the child in my care?

If the household member has serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, call 000 and ask for an ambulance and tell them if the person also has a fever, cough, sore throat or respiratory illness.

Anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, should seek medical advice and get tested.

Common symptoms of coronavirus are fever, chills, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose and loss of sense of smell. For further advice, call the 24-hour coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 or your general practitioner.

Information about symptoms, who should get tested, and the [locations of testing clinics](#) can be found at the [DHHS website](#).

Notify your case worker immediately if a household member of a child in your care has or is suspected of having COVID-19.

If a child or other household member is confirmed as having COVID-19, the care team will work with you to enact any contingency arrangements (if required) and to identify an isolation space and agreed care methods.

If you are unwell, your care team will consider whether the child can safely continue in your care and if another adult carer present in the household is able to assume care responsibilities. Other options including respite or emergency placements will be explored as needed.

Is respite care still available to my family/household?

Check with your case worker at Anglicare Victoria to evaluate the current arrangements for respite care options for consistency and whether it is safe to do so. If there is no confirmed exposure from the respite carers to COVID-19, it may be possible to continue as usual but again, we will need to evaluate all circumstances together with your family and the respite carers and will communicate with you with any changes.

Can children still see their birth families during this pandemic?

The pandemic will be disruptive to current arrangements so please ensure you talk to your case worker at Anglicare Victoria to evaluate the circumstances and safety for the child in your care. Family contact remains important for children and their families. As a result of a return to stage 3 restrictions in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire areas, child protection is reviewing contact and connection arrangements for all children in care to determine if the current arrangements can be maintained or needs to be changed to assure safety.

Each child's situation will be considered individually and all children in care will have a contact and/or connection plan. Connection plans are developed if direct contact is not safe.

A child's contact and/or connection plan is based on the child's situation, considers the current restrictions regarding venue, hygiene and social distancing and a range of factors such as the child's individual needs and development, the ability to ensure the child's health and safety, the child's parents and carers, and court conditions.

All efforts will be made to keep children connected with parents using as many creative means as possible.

You can discuss and confirm contact or connection arrangements for the child in your care with your allocated worker.

We will continue to assess this situation with the Department of Human and Health Services (DHHS) and will communicate any further updates.

What other supports will be provided for carers during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The Victorian Government has provided \$11 million in extra financial support for carers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible foster and kinship carers received a one-off supplementary payment of \$600 per child in their care in May 2020.

In addition to the supplementary payment, the Victorian Government created a flexible funding pool that foster, statutory kinship and permanent carers most in need can access if they require additional financial assistance to ensure stable placements for vulnerable children. Primary foster and statutory kinship carers in need will be able to access these additional financial supports via their Anglicare case worker.

Permanent carers will be able to access these additional funds through Permanent Care and Adoptive Families. Information about eligibility and how to apply for funding can be found at [permanent care flexible funding](#)

Foster and kinship carers can also access further respite care and in-home care support if they require support or a member of their family is unwell and needs to self-isolate. Carers should contact their allocated case worker about accessing additional respite care.

There is also been increased capacity in existing phone line support to carers, via:

- [Foster Care Association of Victoria](#): 9416 4292
- [Kinship Carers Victoria](#): 9372 2422
- [Permanent Care and Adoptive Families](#): 03 9020 1833

Will training still be available through Carer KaFE?

In person training through Carer KaFE has been postponed. Victorian statutory kinship and accredited foster carers should log on to www.carerkafe.org.au/online-learning to register for online learning including online sessions, podcasts, videos and webinars. If you experience any issues registering, please email info@carerekafe.org.au.