



29th June, 2020

Dear Residents, Family and Friends,

COVID-19 UPDATE

As you are all aware, we (JMV) are required to take direction from our relevant government authorities; the visiting restrictions implemented to date and our health monitoring and PPE requirements all stem from our regulatory compliance framework. As updates come to hand, we provide you with this information and plan as required to adjust our operational processes.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has updated and issued a revised statement regarding minimising the impact of COVID-19 in residential aged care facilities specifically the AHPPC in this statement has provided new information related to visitors to residential aged care homes. I have included the statement below, however I also have included following the statement information as to how we (JMV) can accommodate the changed circumstances. I ask that you read this entire communication with an understanding lense and continue to support our approach to maintaining the health and safety of all our people.

AHPPC STATEMENT

Restrictions on entry into RACFs

AHPPC maintains that the following visitors and staff (including visiting workers) should not be permitted to enter a RACF:

- Individuals who have returned from overseas in the last 14 days.
- Individuals who have been in close contact with a confirmed case within the last 14 days.
- Individuals who are unwell, particularly those with fever or acute respiratory infection (for example, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath) symptoms.
- Individuals who have not been vaccinated against influenza.

Recommendations for entry into RACFs

Based on emerging evidence and given the current epidemiological and public health situation in Australia, with low levels of local transmission, AHPPC recommends that:

- children of all ages be permitted to enter RACFs — all visitors, including children, must adhere to restrictions on visitor numbers, social distancing, and personal hygiene
- visiting service providers such as hairdressers, diversional therapists and allied health professionals be permitted to enter RACFs when their services cannot be provided via telehealth or other adaptive models of care, and the resident cannot attend an external facility to receive these services; these providers must adhere to equivalent social distancing and hygiene practices as they have implemented in community settings
- spouses or other close relatives or social supports are not limited in the number of hours that they spend with their spouse/relative

AHPPC recommends that facilities return to a higher level of protection (such as restricting visiting service providers) if there are recent cases of COVID-19 acquired in the local vicinity of the facility. A guide would be that there are cases in the surrounding suburbs or town that have not been acquired overseas.

AHPPC recommends that RACFs implement measures to reduce the risk of transmission to residents, including:

- limiting visits to a maximum of two visitors at any one time per resident
- visits should be conducted in a resident's room, outdoors, or a specified area in the RACF, rather than communal areas with other residents
- no large group visits should be permitted at this time, however gatherings of residents in communal or outdoor areas which adhere to social distancing and current jurisdictional requirements for gathering size may be permitted

Visitors must practise social distancing, including maintaining a distance of 1.5 metres. Visitors have a responsibility to supervise any children with them, practise hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and to comply with directions given by RACF staff.

AHPPC recommends that RACF staff should promote compliance with COVID-19 prevention methods by:

- educating visitors on entry about practising social distancing and hygiene during their visit
- placing signage throughout the facility to remind visitors to maintain these measures
- screening visitors on their current health status upon entry to ensure unwell visitors do not enter the facility

In the event a facility needs to return to a higher level of protection (for example, an outbreak of COVID-19 or local cluster in the community), facilities should supervise visitors.

External excursions

Individuals and family members (close friends, partners, couples, or siblings/familial groups in an RACF) should be permitted to leave the RACF to attend small family gatherings.

- The size of the family gathering should be in line with current jurisdictional advice and physical distancing and hygiene measures should be adhered to during the visit.
- The RACF should conduct a risk assessment for each visit, taking into account the local epidemiology, number of people attending and the feasibility of physical distancing. The RACF should maintain a record of the visit location, number of people in the gathering and the date of visit.

In the event a facility needs to return to a higher level of protection (for example, an outbreak of COVID-19 or local cluster in the community), facilities should cease all external excursions.

Residents

The current AHPPC advice recommends:

- active screening for symptoms of COVID-19 in residents being admitted or re-admitted from other health facilities and community settings should be conducted
- no new residents with COVID-19 compatible symptoms should be permitted to enter the facility, unless the person has recently tested negative for COVID-19

- residents admitted from other health facilities should be assessed by appropriate medical staff prior to admission to the facility and appropriate infection prevention practices should be implemented for residents returning from treatment or care at other facilities

One-off screening on entry or re-entry to the facility should comprise a questionnaire about symptoms of COVID-19 and an initial temperature reading.

If otherwise unexplained symptoms are present or indicated in the response to the questionnaire, or fever is present, the resident should not be admitted to the facility. If admission is unavoidable the resident should be isolated and tested immediately, and appropriate infection prevention and control precautions should be implemented. The resident should be managed as per the CDNA recommendations for suspected COVID-19 cases.

Requirement for visitors to be vaccinated against influenza

Older Australians are at higher risk of morbidity and mortality due to influenza than the general population. While there is no vaccine or treatment for COVID-19, vaccination is a key protective factor against influenza infection. Unvaccinated staff and visitors pose a risk of introducing influenza into a RACF. This would burden the health system and endanger older Australians residing in RACFs.

As a protective measure, AHPPC continues to advise that only visitors and staff who have been vaccinated against influenza may enter RACFs. Individuals with a valid medical reason to not be vaccinated may seek a medical exemption to enter RACFs, in accordance with their jurisdictional requirements.

Management of staff and visitors that are ill

COVID-19 can be introduced into RACFs by staff and visitors who are unwell, which can result in significant outbreaks. RACFs must advise regular visitors and staff to be vigilant in monitoring their health for signs of illness and staying away from RACFs if they are unwell.

RACFs should undertake health symptom screening of all people upon entry as recommended by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. Residential aged care providers need to take responsibility for the health of visitors and staff to whom they grant entry to protect our most vulnerable community members.

Staff who have symptoms of COVID-19 should be excluded from the workplace and be tested for COVID-19. Staff must immediately report their symptoms to the RACF, even very mild symptoms, and not go to any workplaces. Sick leave policies must enable employees to stay home if they have any of the COVID-19 symptoms, as outlined on the Department of Health website.

JAMES MILSON VILLAGE VISITING REQUIREMENTS

We acknowledge the need for our people to have family contact and social engagement. Further, we acknowledge that while we endeavour to provide you all with every opportunity to visit your loved ones, it is not always possible for us to provide the resourcing and the space to accommodate your preferences.

As we have to date, we will continue to review each request individually and work to a solution that best suits all parties. Many James Milson Village personal spaces (rooms) are small and do not provide adequate space for multiple visitors at one time and while we have a selection of outdoor spaces we need to manage the correct social distancing we need apply limits the number of visitors accessing each space at any one time. This automatically applies another layer of limitation and administration to be considered.

I do ask for your understanding a patience with the processes that we will be required to develop and implement to meet our compliance, resourcing and recording requirements. While every endeavour will be applied to have these processes expedited, we are at this time planning for implementation on 28 July 2020; if we are at all able to complete this task earlier then we update you with a revised date.

These processes will have built in daily reviews that take into account the current epidemiology and internal operational factors that have the possibility of introducing COVID-19 to JMV.

General Visitor Information

All visitors will be required to undergo the current process when entering the home. This includes the requirement for:

- health checks;
- wearing shoe covers and masks;
- maintaining correct social distancing;
- maintaining correct hand hygiene

- visiting in resident rooms or booked outdoor spaces only
- all visitors having a current influenza vaccination (you will be required to provide us with evidence of vaccination)

Visiting in special circumstances will continue as usual.

Access for Children

Children are able to visit however children will be required to undergo health checks, maintain correct social distancing, remain within the persons room or the outdoor area, maintain correct hand hygiene and have a current influenza vaccination.

Visiting children need to be included when you are making bookings. We will require evidence of vaccinations prior to children being allowed visitation access.

External Excursions

As we are required to complete a risk assessment for all external excursions, we will require 48 hours to complete the required documentation. The required documentation includes:

- evidence that the size of the family gathering is in line with current jurisdictional advice and physical distancing and hygiene measures
- taking into account the local epidemiology, number of people attending and the feasibility of physical distancing
- maintaining a record of the visit location, number of people in the gathering and the date of visit

In closing as always, I hope that you stay safe and maintain vigilance around the COVIDsafe requirements. It is your partnering with us in applying diligence with health checks, hand hygiene and social distancing requirements that enable us all to be safe and to maintain JMV as a safe haven for all our people

Thank you

Jennifer