



10 March 2022

Very high case load settings to be introduced

Western Australia moved to very high caseload settings from 12.01 am Thursday 10 March to ensure continuity of operations for critical industries as COVID-19 cases approach the peak.

Critical workforce (including healthcare workers)

These settings affect businesses that have registered their critical workforce and include clear rules for asymptomatic critical workers identified as a close contact. These workers will be able to attend work if required, balancing community needs with COVID-19 risk.

Healthcare workers are already considered critical workers under the [COVID Transition \(Healthcare Critical Worker\) Directions](#). The furloughing period for healthcare workers, along with police, is already in effect.

When staff who are close contacts are requested and agree to return to work during the furlough period, the HSP will provide the required RATs. Details will be provided to staff as needed.

For more information and the full list of defined critical workers, visit the [WA Government website](#).

Students

Within the very high caseload settings, under new [Close Contact Modification \(Schools and Approved Education Facilities\) Directions](#), students in school or early childhood education and care settings who are close contacts, will be able to continue attending school or childcare, provided they are asymptomatic, are not COVID-19 positive, or a household contact.

Hospital visitors

As communicated to staff last week, from Sunday 6 March, essential visitors will be permitted to remain with patients outside standard visiting hours.

Essential visitors include someone who is a:

- birth partner
- nominated parent, guardian or carer of a child **or** a person with a disability

- support person for someone who is critically ill/end-of-life (this includes spouses, partners and other significant others, where appropriate).

In addition, while restricting access to essential visitors is preferred, one other visitor per patient is permitted during designated visiting hours. A patient may have more than one visitor during a day, but visitation is limited to one visitor per 2-hour visiting period.

Health advice for close contacts linked to WA schools

Rules for close contacts of COVID-19 cases linked to schools were [announced](#) last weekend to minimise the impact on families when children are identified as close contacts.

Under the rules, parents and carers are not required to automatically quarantine with a child who is identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case.

Parents, carers and siblings who have not been identified as close contacts can continue to attend work or school and should monitor themselves for symptoms.

Depending on the child's needs, one parent or carer may still need to stay home to care for them while the child is quarantining.

Parents and carers of children who are close contacts need to take extra precautions and limit interaction with the close contact where possible and monitor themselves for symptoms. If symptoms arise, they should get tested immediately.

Mental health Good practice guide from Chief Psychiatrist

The Chief Psychiatrist has released the [Good practice guide: Providing mental health when there is community transmission of COVID-19](#) to support clinicians in continuing to deliver high standards of mental health care for patients through the pandemic.

Communication between carers, consumers, medical and mental health teams is key to supporting high standards of timely, person-centred medical and mental health care.

The guide includes support for consumers and carers to plan for isolation, get tested and plan for and communicate their mental health and support needs to treating teams.

[Feedback](#) from mental health staff and managers is welcomed to inform future versions of the guide.

HealthyWA consumer resources

COVID-19 consumer information and resources are updated regularly on the HealthyWA website.

Latest updates include [measures to keep safe at home \(quarantine resources\)](#), prescription treatments for COVID-19 [information for consumers](#) and information for people who are [immunocompromised/at risk of severe illness](#).

COVID-19 staff update webinar

All WA health system staff are invited to weekly COVID-19 update webinars presented by senior COVID-19 response executives.

Webinars are scheduled each week on Tuesdays – visit the [Health Point home page](#) to learn weekly topics and presenters and to access the MS Teams invitation as times may vary.

[A recording of this week's webinar](#) is available on the staff intranet, which featured a special presentation on oral therapeutics for COVID-19 from Infectious Diseases Physician Dr Claire Italiano, East Metropolitan Health Service.

Message Authorised by: Director, Office of Director General