



WA Health's System Alert and Response (SAR) – COVID-19 Framework

The COVID-19 Framework for System Alert and Response (SAR) describes the minimum set of actions and interventions for the WA public system's response to the risks posed by COVID-19. It includes guidance for public hospitals, community dental services and community-based health care services.

Guidance provided in the SAR aims to protect patients, visitors and staff whilst maintaining appropriate and safe care during various levels of risk.

Current WA COVID-19 case data, vaccination rates, service delivery and capacity intelligence for geographical areas will be used to inform the alert and response levels at a statewide, regional or local level.

In areas experiencing high COVID-19 case numbers, actions and interventions will provide higher levels of protection for patients, visitors, staff and the community.

These measures will mean that disruptions to the delivery of healthcare can be minimised and allow, wherever possible, for the continuation of services.

Whilst the SAR is aimed at the public health system, it is recognised that non-government health care organisations including private hospitals, play a role in managing systemwide hospital demand and may find the guidance useful when determining their own strategies and responses to mitigating risks associated with the transmission of COVID-19 and service delivery.

The SAR provides a consistent and coordinated response for all public health system sites and will help clinical teams readily find the right information to keep themselves and their patients safe.

How will it work?

The SAR consists of two key components these include 1) alert levels, which determine the COVID-19 risk rating for geographical areas of the WA public health system; and 2) levels of response, which contain consistent actions and interventions for health services at each alert level.

The SAR contains five risk levels:

- Green (COVID Ready)
- Amber (COVID Alert)
- Red (Widespread transmission)
- Black (System (or part of the system) at Capacity) and
- Blue (Transition)

These levels are designed to reflect the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the community and its impact on the public health system. Alert and response levels will be informed by several factors including: the prevalence of COVID-19 cases within communities, individual geographical areas or across the state; vaccination rates; pathology testing capacity; and health system capacity.

The SAR has been developed to be flexible and to provide clear guidance for public health services in Western Australia and will facilitate rapid decision making by the Chief Health Officer.

As the risk of COVID-19 transmission increases or reduces, so will the level of interventions health services will be required to implement, such as PPE usage or patient screening and testing requirements.

Different parts of the state and individual health services may at times be at different risk levels based on their geographical area in relation to COVID-19 case locations.

If the risk is low, there will be minimal impacts to health services and normal service provision will continue uninterrupted.

In areas where the risk rating is considered moderate or high a range of actions will be triggered. This includes increased use of personal protective equipment (PPE), telehealth, restrictions to hospital visitors or the reduction of elective surgeries to respond to the growing demand on the system.



How will it be implemented?

WA Health Chief Health Officer (CHO) will determine the alert level for a geographical area or region, or for the state, based on a set of defined indicators and thresholds for the 5 levels of risk.

Changes to COVID-19 risk in the community will be discussed by Department of Health COVID-19 executive to determine whether the risk levels for the state, region or an individual health service need to be changed.

If a risk level changes, the Department of Health will communicate this decision to the relevant health service provider executives to enact and communicate to staff. The SAR will also be updated.

The Department of Health will continue to monitor the risk ratings at the state, region and health service level, to ensure appropriate alert levels are allocated and will circulate detailed information regarding the responses required at each level to support implementation of any required change.

The Department of Health will continue to revise the SAR in line with emerging state, national and international best practice and evidence.