Public health guidance for testing and management of COVID-19 cases in Residential Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) settings and Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS)

This factsheet includes the following information:

- Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) schedule for early detection of COVID-19
- RAT schedule during an outbreak
- Immediate actions when there is a confirmed COVID-19 case
- Additional measures if 3 or more clients or workers test positive within a 72-hour period – Service outbreak
- Considering an outbreak over
- Treatment Options for COVID-19

This factsheet is based on NSW Health advice provided on 2 March 2022.

Testing for COVID-19 is an important strategy for early detection and prevention.

Most people can now use a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) result to confirm they are positive for COVID-19.

Information about NSW Health Pathology COVID-19 testing, including rapid PCR testing, can be found at NSW Health Pathology - diagnostic COVID-19 testing.

The below testing regimes are a recommended guide for using RATs for detecting COVID-19 early and for managing an outbreak in a service.

This testing regime can be used where RAT kits are in good supply and there is high COVID-19 transmission in the community. It is important to note that PCR testing remains available where RAT supply is low or is not practical.

RAT schedule for early detection of COVID-19

- Test all new admissions on entry
- Test all clients 2 times per week
- Test workers every second day before entry and commencement of shift
- Test visitors prior to entry
- Test clients anytime if symptomatic

RAT schedule during an outbreak

Where there are 3 or more clients or workers that test positive to COVID-19 within a 72-hour period:

- Test everyone in the service as soon as possible, start with the clients most likely to be exposed.

- Test exposed clients every second day for first 6 to 7 days and on day 12 post exposure.
    - Workers should continue to be tested every second day before entry and commencement of shift.
- Follow the immediate action steps below:

Immediate actions when there is a confirmed COVID-19 case

If the positive case is a client

1. Ensure they are aware of their result.
2. Isolate the client immediately in their own single room, preferably with their own bathroom. Meals are to be delivered to their door. Follow the [Getting tested for COVID-19 factsheet](#).
3. Identify and test exposed clients and workers, follow the [People Exposed to COVID-19 factsheet](#).
   a) Clients who are in the same room as a case or who normally extensively socialise/interact with the case will be considered high risk contacts and need to isolate.
4. Ensure they have registered their test result with [Service NSW](#). Where a client is unable to independently complete the information on the Service NSW portal, a provider should register the result on behalf of the client. This can be done by selecting the "continue as guest" option on the Service NSW portal.
5. Provide them with [NSW Health Self-Isolation Guidelines](#) and the [People with COVID-19 factsheet](#).

If the positive case is a worker:

1. Confirm they have registered their positive test result with Service NSW and follow the [Getting tested for COVID-19 factsheet](#). Consider follow up PCR to confirm the result.
2. Provide them with [NSW Health Self-Isolation Guidelines and the People with COVID-19 factsheet](#).
3. Identify and test exposed clients and workers, follow the [People Exposed to COVID-19 factsheet](#).

Additional measures if 3 or more clients or workers test positive within a 72-hour period – Service outbreak

Outbreak definition: 3 or more clients or workers who test positive within a 72-hour period.

1. **Notify the local Public Health Unit of the outbreak**

Contact and notify the Public Health Unit via phone: 1300 066 055.

The Public Health Unit can provide advice on managing the outbreak response.

2. Testing requirements

Test all clients and workers within the service as soon as possible.

Then following the testing schedule above for an outbreak, unless directed by the Public Health Unit.

3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use

Workers should wear appropriate PPE when working in the service during an outbreak. Clients who are not isolating should also be encouraged to wear masks in communal areas (for e.g., TV rooms, etc.).

4. Zoning

Where possible, identify zones within the service that can be restricted to:

b) clients that test positive
c) clients that are exposed and
d) unaffected clients.

Where possible, ensure workers and clients from different zones do not intermingle.

5. Restrictions on visitors

The service should restrict visitors until the outbreak is contained and no further transmission is occurring in the service.

Public Health can provide guidance on when an outbreak has been contained.

6. Documentation

Ensure accurate documentation and reporting of all tests conducted and positive cases. Public Health may provide templates to help support documentation.

Considering an outbreak over

Generally, an outbreak within the service can be considered over once no new client cases have been identified for 7 days. However, a period of ongoing surveillance may be recommended with day 12 testing where there has been significant transmission or where a significant number of clients are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations.

Treatment Options for COVID-19

Antiviral and other early treatments options are available for people at risk of severe disease from COVID-19. Service providers should have a pathway to COVID-19 treatment for eligible clients.

Information on use of antivirals and monoclonal antibodies can be found in this guidance document.

Reference: These guidelines have been developed with reference to the CDNA guidelines for managing COVID-19 in residential care facilities: [CDNA National Guidelines for the prevention, control and public health management of COVID-19 outbreaks in residential care facilities in Australia](#)