

Frequently Asked Questions

What is WA Primary Health Alliance doing about COVID-19?

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) is working closely with and acting on the advice of the Australian and WA Government Departments of Health to support the COVID-19 vaccination program and prepare for living with COVID-19 in WA.

The Australian Government has tasked Australia's 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) with leading five key primary health care activity workstreams:

1. Work in partnership with the WA Department of Health and Health Service Providers to develop a core **COVID-19 Positive Community Care Pathway** for Western Australia with localisation as required.
2. Support for Primary Care from the **National Medical Stockpile**.
3. **Commissioning Home Visits** by clinicians to prevent avoidable hospitalisations
4. Provision of **up to date and reliable information and resources** for general practice.
5. Extension of the role and the reach of **General Practice Respiratory Clinics**

Update 26 January 2022: Read more about WAPHA's COVID-19 response role [here](#).

How will WAPHA service providers be updated with timely information from WAPHA?

Ongoing [COVID-19 Information and resources for service providers](#) updates can be found on the WAPHA website.

In addition, we have increased the frequency of our Service Provider Connect Newsletter to keep timely updated information shared with our Providers, if you are not receiving these you can [subscribe here](#).

COVID VACCINATIONS

What does the WA Mandatory Vaccination Policy mean to WAPHA commissioned service providers

On 20 October 2021, WA Premier Mark McGowan announced a [Mandatory Vaccination Policy](#) for WA workforces. The expanded policy prepares the community for the expected transmission of COVID-19 in WA, and importantly, provides greater protection for people who are at high risk of poor outcomes if they were to contract COVID-19.

Update 26 January 2022: The WA Government has announced a requirement for all workers covered by the Directions to obtain a third dose of an approved COVID-19

vaccine within one month of becoming eligible to receive it. Eligibility to receive a third dose is currently four months after a person having received their second dose; and will be reduced to three months from 31 January 2022. To find out if you are eligible for your third dose click [here](#)

Updated 1st April 2022: The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has recommended an additional winter dose of the COVID-19 vaccination for selected population groups. Further information is available at the WA Health COVID-19 vaccine FAQs webpage [here](#), under the COVID-19 vaccine doses and timing tab.

What does it mean for you as a WAPHA commissioned service provider?

WAPHA commissioned service providers work closely with vulnerable communities and at-risk people. It is critical that health and community service provider staff are protected as much as possible against COVID-19 to minimise the spread and severity of impact.

It is extremely important for all service providers to review the mandatory vaccination information so that you know when and who within your workforce requires vaccination to prevent service disruption.

Information about WA's COVID-19 vaccination requirements can be found [here](#).

Where can service provider staff and clients get vaccinated?

Information about where people living in WA can get vaccinated can be found using the links below:

- [General Practice provided vaccinations](#)
- [WA Health run clinics](#)
- [Vaccine Clinic Finder](#)
- [Roll up for WA](#)

Where do I get more information about COVID vaccine exemption?

Information about obtaining a medical exemption for COVID Vaccination can be found in the list of Frequently asked Questions at the [WA Department of Health Website](#).

CONTRACT RELATED QUESTIONS

What will happen to our WAPHA funding if service delivery is impacted by COVID-19?

We want to provide assurance of continuation of financial support into the future for WAPHA commissioned service providers. Regular contact with and notifying your contract manager about any service changes and disruptions will assist the contract manager to support you as best as possible.

During these times WAPHA will continue to reassess the situation with commissioned providers, and if it is determined an unavoidable delay has eventuated, will discuss service agreement requirements and obligations with your organisation.

An overview of the contract management process where services cannot be delivered to expected quality or quantity due to impacts of COVID-19 on WAPHA commissioned service providers, can be found [here](#)

What are the contractual obligations for commissioned service providers who have been in quarantine or exposed to COVID-19?

WAPHA will work with commissioned service providers to ensure access to commissioned services where there is COVID exposure within the community. This may take the form of changes to mode of service delivery, delivery location, and hours of service provision (amongst others) and this will be undertaken in collaboration with service providers.

During these times we will continue to reassess the situation with commissioned providers, and if it is determined an unavoidable delay has eventuated, WAPHA will discuss service agreement requirements and obligations with your organisation. Regular contact with and notifying your contract manager about service changes and disruptions will assist the contract manager to support you as best as possible.

Does WAPHA have any information to help COVID response and recovery planning?

To determine how prepared your workplace is, please see our [commissioned services checklist](#). There are also a range of other resources available [under the COVID-19 information resources for service providers](#).

Can WAPHA funds be used to cover costs of additional cleaning and general COVID compliance (e.g. vaccination)?

It would be reasonable for service providers to utilise WAPHA funding for operational costs associated with service delivery of a contracted service.

PPE and RAT questions

Is WAPHA able to supply service providers with masks and other PPE?

WAPHA has been advised by the Australian Department of Health that the National Medical Stockpile is a strategic reserve and not a general supplier of personal protective equipment (PPE). The Stockpile is only intended to provide PPE where commercial supply is unavailable and there is a demonstrated need or clinical advice for its use.

Service providers are encouraged to identify and secure PPE and hand sanitiser for workforce and client safety requirements now and arrange for supply during a COVID outbreak / lockdown.

From **24 March 2022** all PPE orders from general practices which qualify for [Living with COVID PPE bundles from the National Medical Stockpile](#) will be dispatched through a national distribution system, overseen by the Australian Government Department of Health, and run by DHL. WAPHA's role will be to receive and validate orders, then release them into the national ordering system.

Can WAPHA funds be utilised for fit testing of N95 masks for staff?

It would be reasonable for service providers to utilise WAPHA funding for the staff within the contracted service, not all staff across the organisation, to undertake fit testing for the fitting of a N95 mask.

Can WAPHA funds be used to purchase of Rapid Antigen Tests for WAPHA commissioned services?

As with PPE, the provision of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) by WAPHA to WAPHA commissioned service providers will not be occurring. Use of RATs are guided by the [WA Health guidance about the use of RATs](#).

Should RAT testing be required by WAPHA commissioned service providers in the future as directed by WA Health Public Health Directions, it would be reasonable for service providers to purchase RATs using WAPHA funding for the staff within the contracted service and clients accessing the service, not for all staff undertaking or other clients accessing other organisational activities.

Updated 21 March 2022 As part of the [WA Free RAT Program](#), every WA household is eligible for free RATs.

Update 9 May 2022 WA Government's free RAT Program was expanded to include free RATs for close contacts. For more information see [here](#).

How does the use of WAPHA funds for purchasing RATs and PPE work for fee for service contracts?

Providers can use WAPHA contracted funding to purchase PPE for the staff within the contracted service and where required, for clients accessing the service.

Fee for service contracted service providers are encouraged to contact their contract manager to discuss the use of WAPHA funds for PPE and RATs required for the contracted service.

EMPLOYEE RELATED QUESTIONS

Is there any advice regarding COVID-19 vaccination workplace rights and obligations?

The Australian Government FairWork Ombudsman has produced a useful resource for workplaces affected by vaccine mandates covering topics [here](#). The topics include:

- Lawful and reasonable directions to get vaccinated
- Stand downs
- Asking for proof of vaccination

The WA Government also provides advice on COVID-19, including:

- [Information for employers regarding the COVID-19 Vaccination roll out.](#)
- [Employment impacted by COVID](#) provides COVID provides information for private sector employers and employees on employment obligations and entitlements relevant to a range of situations, including vaccination, employer guidance for employee management and employee entitlements
- [COVID-19 Consumer Protection information.](#)

Can WAPHA funds be used to provide 2 weeks of COVID leave for WAPHA commissioned service employees who become positive?

The type of leave arrangements introduced by an organisation is based on relevant Awards / Enterprise Bargaining Agreements and contractual agreements between individual organisations and their employees.

Regular contact with and notifying your contract manager about any service changes and disruptions will assist the contract manager to support you as best as possible. During these times WAPHA will continue to reassess the situation with commissioned providers, and if it is determined an unavoidable delay has eventuated, will discuss service agreement requirements and obligations with your organisation.

SERVICE DELIVERY INFORMATION

What are online team support facilities available to support a remote workforce?

There are several tools available to support business continuity and service delivery. WAPHA uses [Microsoft Teams](#), but there are other platforms available. Some of these include:

- [Google Hangouts](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [Skype for business](#)
- [WhatsApp](#)

Can service providers travel to provide services?

The WA Government activates travel restrictions where there is a threat to a community / region. Interstate, international and regional travel advice is available from the [WA COVID-19 coronavirus: Travel to WA website](#). Information about what you need to know to travel to remote Aboriginal Communities is provided on the [COVID19-coronavirus: Remote Aboriginal Communities travel](#) website.

It is appropriate that service providers consider their level of preparedness for a COVID-19 outbreak / lockdown and explore alternative options for service provision such as telephone or video consultations, where appropriate.

Do you have any advice about providing services to people who are unvaccinated or refuse to disclose their vaccination status?

How unvaccinated clients are managed by an organisation is an individual organisation's decision based on a risk assessment process and relevant WA Public Health Directions.

The [Safe Work Australia](#) provides COVID-19 information and advice for employers related to service users and the need for controls to be in place to protect both workers and other customers.

The Australian Human Rights Commission also provides advice on COVID-19 vaccinations and federal discrimination law [here](#).

The [Justice Connect, Not-for-profit Law website](#), which provides legal help for community organisations states the following in response to the question 'Can an organisation refuse to provide services to an unvaccinated service user?'

Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) also provide advice on what might be considered by Psychotherapists and Counsellors [here](#).

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Where can I get more information about caring for COVID-19 positive people in the community?

[WAPHA recognises that commissioned services may have to manage complex client needs that will be complicated by the presence of COVID-19 in the WA community,](#)

WAPHA has developed a series of webpages to provide information and referral resources, to support caring for COVID-19 positive people in the community. [The Caring for COVID-19 Positive People in you region webpage](#) provides general information relevant to all WA health regions and provides links to regional specific webpages. A wide range of topics are covered such as Mental Health Support Services and Resources, Food Support services and Resources, Pharmacy and pathology services.

The webpages can be accessed [here](#).

Do hospitalisation and death statistics associated with Omicron compare well with a typical influenza season?

Information about Omicron in Australia is still being gathered and we will continue to seek up-to-date advice and provide information as it becomes known. What we do know is Omicron is classified as a [variant of concern](#) based on initial evidence that it spreads quickly, with the [severity](#) associated with Omicron still being determined. Comparative data of various COVID-19 strains and the typical influenza season is limited. Provisional Mortality Statistics can be accessed via the [ABS website](#). The Australian Influenza Surveillance Report is published regularly during the influenza season, and a key message from the 2020 [influenza surveillance report](#) noted a lower activity levels of influenza (and influenzas like illness).

Further information around the impact of COVID-19 epidemic with the implemented health measures had on the Australian influenza season can be found [here](#).