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COVID-19 Residential Aged Care Facilities Outbreak Plan: Frequently asked questions

Overview

The COVID-19 Residential Aged Care Facilities Plan (COVID-19 RACF Plan) has been developed by the Planning Cell of the State Health Incident Coordination Centre (SHICC). In combination with the overall COVID-19 WA Integrated Outbreak Containment and Response Plan (WA Integrated Plan), it outlines a multi-agency response to a COVID-19 outbreak in a residential aged care facility.

The COVID-19 RACF Plan complements local and agency specific plans and describes a phased response to an outbreak of COVID-19 if/when the need arises to shift from a local response to a state wide/system wide response. The plan is intended for use by all agencies and responders involved in a system response.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the plan?

The COVID-19 RACF Plan considers the potential for an outbreak in residential aged care facility and identifies the key connections and collaborations required in the event that an outbreak occurs. Roles and responsibilities for those involved are outlined and include a range of stakeholders from residential aged care facilities, Public Health, Western Australian Country Health Service, St Johns Ambulance Service and Western Australian Police to effectively manage situations should they arise.

The COVID-19 RACF Plan is structured in five phases, with phases 3 and 4 occurring simultaneously:

- Phase 1: Outbreak prevention and preparedness;
- Phase 2: Outbreak standby and monitoring;
- Phase 3/4: Outbreak response – rapid escalation from initial to targeted action; and
- Phase 5: Outbreak recovery

When does the plan become active?

The COVID-19 RACF Plan is active whilst Western Australia (WA) is in the 'Response' phase of the State Hazard Plan for Human Biosecurity. Currently WA is in Phase 2: Standby and monitoring phase of the COVID-19 RACF Plan.

What happens if an outbreak in a residential aged care facility is declared?

Once the definition of an outbreak is met and the Deputy Chief Health Officer, Public Health declares an outbreak, the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) notifies the residential aged care facility and the COVID-19 State Incident Controller within SHICC. Key agencies such as the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission are also notified.

The PHEOC will provide public health advice to the person/s confirmed with COVID-19 as able and to the residential aged care facility affected by the outbreak. This advice will consider the specific setting of the RACF including the need to isolate residents, provision of protective equipment if needed and information on hygiene practices. The SHICC will also assist with the management of the outbreak and involve support agencies as needed. The SHICC will assist the residential aged care facility with communication material and coordinate all communication to ensure consistency in the messages provided.

What about an outbreak in a country location?

In regional and remote areas, the Western Australian Country Health Service will provide assistance to the outbreak response outlined above.

How does the outbreak plan affect what I am currently doing?

The COVID-19 RACF Plan and the WA Integrated Plan are planning documents which outline prevention and preparation recommendations a facility should have completed given the current State of Emergency in Western Australia under the *Emergency Management Act WA, 2005*. These recommendations do not change current work practices other than to outline the responsibilities of facilities and agencies to prevent, prepare and standby for a potential COVID-19 outbreak.

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