

Tuesday 1 September, 2020

What to expect during a COVID-19 outbreak in an aged care home Information for residents and their families

Dear residents and families,

We are writing to provide you with some important information in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 within a BaptistCare Home. These changes take place under the advice and guidance of government authorities and NSW/ACT Health.

If one or more residents or staff members has contracted COVID-19, there are some changes that will take place quite quickly to help prevent the spread of the virus. It is important that you understand that all changes are designed to protect our vulnerable residents and staff.

This letter provides a summary of what changes to expect:

Closure of the home to visitors

This means that all visitors will be restricted and residents will be required to remain in their rooms. BaptistCare staff will explain what is happening, and why these changes are necessary for the safety of all residents and staff. Signs will be placed across the home confirming that the home is now closed to all visitors and non-essential workers. Communications will be issued to all primary contacts of residents as soon as possible.

Residents will be asked to remain in their rooms

If a resident has tested positive to COVID-19 they will continue to be isolated from other residents. This may involve moving the resident to a different room to be cared for by staff. Residents will be closely monitored and may be transferred to hospital. Decisions on hospital transfers will be made on a case by case basis, in consultation with the medical experts.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All staff will wear PPE such as gowns, gloves and masks. This protective equipment is designed to help all residents and staff stay safe and stop the spread of infection. In addition to the use of PPE, the home will undergo increased cleaning of all areas and surfaces. In some instances, residents may also be required to wear PPE.

All staff and residents will be tested

The current NSW Health protocol is that all residents and staff will be tested for COVID-19, and this may need to take place more than once as the outbreak is managed. Staff will carefully monitor all residents with temperature and breathing checks and will look for any changes. Staffing changes may occur as the usual staff may need to self-isolate as a result of the outbreak. This may mean that new staff will be brought in to provide or assist with residents' care. With any changes in staffing, all replacement staff will be provided with a briefing about the individual care needs of each resident.

Increased Communications

While managing the outbreak in the home, BaptistCare will communicate regularly with residents, families and staff. We will provide timely updates to each resident's primary contact about the steps being taken to manage the outbreak while making every effort to ensure families can communicate with their loved one during this time. Once the Connections Coordinator/s are established in the home they will be on hand to facilitate phone calls and video conferencing between the resident and their families.

Please ensure your contact details are up to date

If you are the primary contact of your loved one, please ensure that all of your contact details are up to date with your BaptistCare home. We use SMS (text messages) to provide rapid information to your mobile phone. You can update your details directly with the home.

Advance Care Planning

Many residents have an Advance Care Record that explains to clinical staff and their family how the resident wants to be treated if they can no longer speak for themselves or make their own decisions. It specifies what medical treatment and care the resident would or would not like to have in the event of a critical health event. If you or your loved one would like to discuss putting an Advance Care Record in place, please speak directly with the Care Team Manager or Residential Manager at the home.

'Have your Say' and share your feedback

Your experience of this situation is incredibly important to us. We want to hear from you at any time if you are feeling you need to speak with us about how we are managing this situation, including feedback, questions or concerns.

<https://baptistcare.org.au/contact-us>

Support for families

We also want to let you know that if you need support from an independent organisation, you can contact the **Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)** on **1800 237 981**, from 6am - 10pm, 7 days a week. This number will connect you with the aged care advocacy organisation in your state or territory or visit:

<https://opan.com.au/>

For more information

For more information on **what to expect during a COVID-19 outbreak in an aged care home**, we encourage you to watch this short video by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPT-AztUd6w&feature=youtu.be>

We thank you all for your support and cooperation as we work together to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our residents and staff.

Keep safe and well.

Allan Waters

General Manager – Residential Services