

Communication when a resident tests positive for COVID-19

First, [prepare your communication systems](#).

The following guidelines can help with communication in this difficult situation.

Prompt initial communication

The Australian Department of Health has produced [guidance for managing COVID-19 in a residential aged care facility in the first 24 hours](#).

1. Initial communication should occur with all residents. Residents should receive communication from a familiar, trustworthy person, who can discuss their diagnosis with sensitivity and compassion. Only begin communication with nominated representatives after the resident consents, unless they have lost capacity to manage their own medical affairs.
2. A member of the care staff must phone the nominated person for the resident who has tested positive for COVID-19 as soon as possible. This is a sensitive call that will create anxiety and stress, and prompt questions. Ask them to share information with other family members or friends. Explain when care staff will be in contact again.
3. Contact the Australian Government Department of Health by emailing agedcareCOVIDcases@health.gov.au
4. Contact the Victorian Public Health Unit by calling [1300 651 160](tel:1300651160)
5. Contact all staff and inform them of the COVID-19 case. Work will begin urgently with the State Government Public Health Unit to:
 - begin contact tracing
 - identify who will need to self-isolate or quarantine
 - inform staff of education and support opportunities, as well as availability of hotel or onsite accommodation for staff wanting to protect family members.
6. Phone the nominated representative of every resident to let them know there is a COVID-19 case. Dedicate sufficient staff to do this. Remind the nominated representative that they need to share this information with extended family. Let them know all that you are doing to protect their loved one and contain the spread in the facility.
7. Send an email to your resident and family distribution list. You can attach or link to the list of [key contacts for families](#) if you wish. Inform them that:
 - there is a COVID-19 case at the facility
 - the facility is working with Commonwealth and state health authorities to manage the situation
 - care of their loved ones is the highest priority
 - you are bringing in extra support to help – for example, surge workforce, rapid COVID-19 testing capabilities, rapid stocks of personal protective equipment
 - you will communicate with them regularly (specify how)
 - you will make all phone contact via the resident's nominated person.
 - they can use the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) via their website or calling [1800 700 600](tel:1800700600).