

# Preparing your communication system for a COVID-19 outbreak

All residential aged care facilities should prepare their communication systems in case they experience a COVID-19 outbreak.

1. Phone the nominated representative for each resident in your facility to confirm you have their latest contact number(s) and email.
2. Check they understand their obligations to:
  - be contactable
  - pass information on to family and friends.
3. Reassure them that your facility is prepared if there is a COVID-19 case. Describe the process for informing families in case of an outbreak.
4. Ask if you can share their contact details with government authorities and the [Older Persons Advocacy Network](#). Note that their details will not be used for marketing, but strictly for professional services to help the facility.
5. Establish a clear list of the contact details of the nominated person for each aged care resident. Organise the list logically – either alphabetically or via room number.
6. If you have not already done so, establish an email distribution list for residents and family members. You can include extended family members (beyond the nominated representative) on this list.
7. Send a test email to the resident and family distribution list. Include these points:
  - You understand the anxiety they feel.
  - Your facility places great importance on communication with families.
  - You are setting up processes in case you need to communicate with them during the pandemic.
  - Include an email address people can use to register for your email updates. Ask recipients to send this address to all loved ones who would like updates from the facility.
8. Ensure your facility has appropriate devices and resources to connect residents with their families via phone and video calls:
  - smart phones or tablets
  - tripods or other supports to hold devices
  - online scheduling tools so that family members can schedule video calls with their loved ones, and communal devices are managed efficiently.
9. If you have not already done so, establish an email distribution list for all staff and contractors who work at your facility.
10. Update your website with a statement on your response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including how you are managing communications. This could be under a new tab called 'COVID-19 update' or an existing 'News' section. Update the statement as the situation evolves. Keep the frequency of updates and level of detail consistent.
11. Advise families about the role of, and how to access, the [Older Persons Advocacy Network](#) (OPAN). There is an [OPAN flyer](#) you can distribute to families to let them know about the support OPAN can provide.
12. Advise families about the role of, and how to access, the [Aged Care Safety and Quality Commission](#) via their website or phoning [1800 951 822](#). The role of the Commission is to independently accredit, assess and monitor aged care services subsidised by the Australian Government. The Commission also [resolves complaints](#).