



## Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for Residential Respite Providers

As the risk of serious illness increases with age and during COVID-19, people who need respite may:

- be unable to access this service, or
- choose to enter, extend, or exit respite.

This might be due to isolation or quarantine requirements, health advice or other factors.

This fact sheet is to assist residential respite providers to manage these situations.

### Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessments

Due to COVID-19, ACATs are taking a flexible approach to the delivery of assessments.

Local circumstances and client choice guide ACATs' decisions on how to conduct assessments. ACATs should offer face-to-face assessments where it is possible and safe. However, ACATs have protocols in place to return to telephone assessments should a local outbreak occur.

If necessary, ACATs can use emergency provisions under the *Aged Care Act 1997* (the Act) during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Sections s22-5 of the Act and s13 of the *Approval of Care Recipients Principles 2014* provide for urgent circumstances. In an emergency, this allows a person:

- to enter an aged care home for respite care
- without an ACAT approval.

If a person enters respite without an ACAT approval, you must:

- complete an [Application for Care Form](#) including the Emergency Case section, and
- send the completed form to the ACAT within five business days of the date the person entered care.

The ACAT delegate can decide to approve a person effective from the day on which care started:

- if the person urgently needed the care because an emergency existed, and
- it was not practicable to apply for approval beforehand.

If you can't submit the form within five days, you can apply to the ACAT delegate for an extension. Requests for an extension should be via email and only in exceptional circumstances.

During the assessment process you may:

- need to help the client to participate in the assessment process, and
- tell the assessor about the person's care needs, circumstances and eligibility.

Visit the My Aged Care provider portal to request:

- respite care extensions, and
- support plan reviews.

For more information on these ACAT assessment processes, please contact your ACAT assessor teams.

## Clients still need access to residential respite

Some providers may restrict access to respite care at their service to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We encourage providers to continue to accept people who need residential respite. Residential care visitor restrictions and [infection control measures](#) apply to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The [Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19](#) is also available.

## Duration of respite care and extensions for clients

Eligible clients are entitled to 63 days of subsidised respite care in a financial year. Clients may, however, apply for as many 21 day extensions as needed. Clients who wish to continue in respite care must request a residential respite extension through the My Aged Care provider portal. This must be requested on, or before, 63 days (or 21 days) has ended. An ACAT will decide whether to grant or reject the extension.

During a COVID-19 emergency lockdown, a client may require an extension in residential respite care. This may occur if they have been unexpectedly quarantined in an aged care home.

If you are not able to submit a respite extension request through the provider portal, seek ACAT assistance.

In this situation advise the ACAT:

- of the Aged Care Identification (AC ID) number, and
- the relevant starting date of the care extension by email or fax.

There are no limits on the number of residential respite care extensions an ACAT delegate can grant. However each request must have a start date that is after the current extension period.

ACAT delegates may only grant care extensions for the approved level of care (i.e. residential respite low or high). If a client needs a higher level of respite, they will require a new assessment. To do this you can:

- request a Support Plan Review in the provider portal, or
- contact the ACAT for assistance. They can also raise a Support Plan Review request to support the provider due to emergency circumstances.

You can check the My Aged Care client record for the outcome of the decision. If you're currently providing residential respite care services via a My Aged Care provider portal referral:

- you will receive the ACAT delegate's decision through:
  - 'Tasks and Notifications' within the notifications, and
  - your My Aged Care provider outlet contact email address.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, you should:

- discuss a client's care needs with the client and their families, and
- assist to seek the appropriate approvals required for extending their respite if needed.

## Streamlined process for a provider to increase or vary the number of respite days

We have streamlined the provider application process to increase (or vary) the number of residential respite days at a service. This is to assist aged care providers to respond to demand for respite care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You can now apply by email to change the maximum number of residential respite days. You should send your e-mail to the Department's office in the state or territory of the aged care service.

An email request to increase the number of respite days should include these details:

- service name
- total number of respite days required, and
- date of effect.

The relevant state/ territory office will notify you of the outcome by email.

**You can contact the relevant state or territory office via these email address:**

[QLDPlaces@health.gov.au](mailto:QLDPlaces@health.gov.au)

[NSWPlaces@health.gov.au](mailto:NSWPlaces@health.gov.au) (including applications from the ACT)

[VICPlaces@health.gov.au](mailto:VICPlaces@health.gov.au)

[TASPlaces@health.gov.au](mailto:TASPlaces@health.gov.au)

[SAPlaces@health.gov.au](mailto:SAPlaces@health.gov.au)

[WAPlaces@health.gov.au](mailto:WAPlaces@health.gov.au)

[NTPlaces@health.gov.au](mailto:NTPlaces@health.gov.au)

## Respite Incentive Supplement

Residential aged care providers are eligible for the respite incentive supplement when:

- they use an average of 70 per cent or more of their respite care allocation,
- over 12 months.

This helps with the higher administration and care costs of providing high-level respite care. Services Australia automatically pays this supplement for eligible clients, when an aged care provider meets the 70 per cent target. The payment is for each of the high-level care respite days provided during that month.

**Further Information**

- Aged care peak bodies and consumer advocacy groups have released the [Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19](#). The Code is a nationally consistent approach to enable people to visit residents safely during the pandemic. The Code was developed through public consultation with consumers and aged care providers. It includes the respective rights and responsibilities of providers, residents and visitors. It describes how residential aged care services should enable visits while minimising the risk of COVID-19 within the facility.
- Any current direction or requirements for flu vaccination apply to clients in residential respite.
- We have published a [collection of COVID-19 resources](#), including responses to [frequently asked questions](#), on our website. There is further information for the [general public](#) and [industry](#). The Department updates this information regularly.
- We also publish a COVID-19 newsletter on our [website](#). Our newsletter lets you know when there are updates to aged care information. You can subscribe to the newsletter and aged care sector email announcements at: [www.health.gov.au/using-our-websites/subscriptions/subscribe-to-aged-care-sector-announcements-and-newsletters](http://www.health.gov.au/using-our-websites/subscriptions/subscribe-to-aged-care-sector-announcements-and-newsletters).
- The My Aged Care provider portal user guide provides instructions.
  - Part 1 includes how to update service and waitlist availability on My Aged Care: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/01/my-aged-care-provider-portal-user-guide-part-1-administrator-functions.pdf>
  - Part 2 includes how to make a support plan review request and record client notes: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/my-aged-care-provider-portal-user-guide-part-2-team-leader-and-staff-member-functions>