

# ACTPS WHS GUIDANCE: COVID-19 AND WHS REQUIREMENTS FOR VULNERABLE WORKERS



ACT Government is working to ensure that our workplaces are safe for our employees and others using our services. This includes changing the way that we work as the public health advice is updated.

We cannot eliminate the risk of employees being exposed to and/or contracting COVID-19 while carrying out work, but we must do all that is reasonably practicable to minimise that risk.

All workplaces need to consider their work and their workforce in developing and implementing control measures to address the risks associated with exposure to COVID19. Information and guidance on these obligations is available on the [COVID-19 WHS](#) information for the ACTPS sharepoint site.

This is generic, service wide advice and Directorates may adapt this advice for their workforce, particularly in the case of direct health employees. For this reason, employees should check with their Directorate HR for specific advice on workplace arrangements relevant to them.

## Additional WHS requirements for vulnerable workers

A [vulnerable worker](#) is an employee who is likely to be at higher risk of serious illness if they are infected with the virus. From 30 March 2020, there are specific work health and safety arrangements in place for these workers.

The following people are considered vulnerable workers:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more [chronic medical conditions](#)
- people 65 years and older with [chronic medical conditions](#) (conditions included in the definition of chronic medical conditions that increase the risk of serious illness from COVID-19 will be refined as more evidence emerges);
- people 70 years and older; and
- [people with compromised immune systems](#).

To identify and manage the risks to vulnerable workers, particularly those in customer-facing areas:

- employees who consider that they fit into the vulnerable worker category **need to self-identify** to their manager or HR team; and
- directorates who are managing the delivery of frontline and/or essential services must identify workers who are vulnerable, using all available sources (such as HR data) and not

rely solely on self-identification.

## What you need to do

### If you are a vulnerable worker

If you consider that you are a vulnerable worker you should advise your manager and directorate HR team by email. Your manager will work with the HR team to make arrangements for your work health and safety, such as working from home or in a role with reduced COVID risk.

### If you are a manager of a vulnerable worker

If someone in your team identifies themselves to you as a vulnerable worker, or your HR area advises you that someone in your team is a vulnerable worker, you need to work with your HR team and the team member to assess and manage the work health and safety risks for that employee, specifically:

- you must first consider approaches to remove the employee from the risk through a change in their workplace, such as working from home or in the case of CHS, this may be in a patient setting with reduced risk;
- if the employee's current work is not suitable for a working from home arrangement you must consider options for allocation of alternative duties and/or redeployment that can be done in a working from home arrangement;
- if the employee's situation does not enable a working from home arrangement, you must consider options for risk management for their existing role or allocation of alternative duties and/or redeployment in the workplace, that removes the employee from customer-facing contact;
- if none of the above options are possible, the employee must be placed on leave '[where leave cannot be granted under any other provision](#)' (COVID-19 Leave').

Provision of PPE and administrative controls, such as rostering changes, are not considered appropriate controls on their own to manage the risks arising from customer contact or other high-risk work for vulnerable workers. Additional measures must be considered to remove the employee to a non-customer facing role.

If an employee is able to work from home, you must work with them to ensure they can do this safely. Information to assist in managing working from home arrangements is available on the ACT Employment Portal. You need to ensure that vulnerable workers are supported with access to current information and advice about working arrangements during COVID-19.

## More information

The [ACT Employment Portal](#) has information and resources to support employees and managers during COVID-19.

The latest information on COVID-19 is available from:

- [ACT Government COVID-19](#) website
- Australian Government [Department of Health](#)
- [ACT Health](#)

**Use this flowchart to manage the WHS requirements for vulnerable workers during COVID-19**

