CHS COVID-19 TRANSITION PLAN

Return to the workplace for CHS staff.

MY SAFETY

YOUR SAFETY

OUR PRIORITY

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1. Purpose

Canberra Health Services (CHS) is committed to the provision of a safe and healthy working environment. The purpose of the CHS COVID-19 Transition Plan is to provide all areas of CHS with information about:

- transitioning workplaces to reflect the COVID-19 environment;
- managing risk in the COVID-19 environment;
- COVID-19 vaccination requirements for CHS staff; and
- complying with ACTPS WHS requirements for the management of COVID-19.

In planning changes to working arrangements such as a return to workplaces and introducing hybrid arrangements after a period of working from home, CHS has developed a COVID-19 transition plan tailored to COVID-19 risks for the organisation that are consistent with ACTPS COVID-19 safety transition plan policy and the COVID-19 WHS guide.

CHS will ensure that the transition plan addresses changed service delivery, work arrangements and/or transition of employees back to usual workplaces in addition to their COVID-19 workplace risks and consult and communicate with employees and their representatives in developing and implementing the plan.

2. Scope

The CHS Transition Plan to return all staff to the workplace and ensure a COVID-19 Safe Environment:

- applies to all CHS managers and workers; and
- outlines the minimum requirements to meet CHS and legislative requirements for managing the WHS risks associated with COVID-19.

3. Background

3.1 COVID-19

An outbreak of the disease known as COVID-19, a new strain of coronavirus, has occurred across the world and Australia. The first case of COVID-19 in the ACT was first identified on 11 March 2020. A Public Health Emergency was declared in the ACT on 16 March 2021. This Transition Plan will continue to take direction from ACT Health, the lead agency, as provided via ACT Public Health Directions - COVID-19.

3.2 CHS Context

As part of the comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CHS implemented a mandatory vaccination requirement for all staff in accordance with the Public Health Order (PHO). This resulted in some CHS staff working from home or redeployed to other areas due to approved medical

exemptions or personal choice. A return of all staff to the workplace will need to include a CHS position on vaccination status once the PHO is removed.

Many CHS staff have been working from home as one of the measures in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the ACT. As the situation changes there will be a gradual return to usual workplaces in line with the easing of public health restrictions. As the ACTPS embraces more flexible ways of working, renewed ways of delivering services needs to be considered and implemented if determined to be feasible by ensuring equal or greater levels of service in line with operational goals and maintaining staff and patient safety e.g. hybrid working arrangements.

A hybrid working arrangement means that there are some time/days working in the usual work location, such as the office, and some time working elsewhere in another approved location, such as from home. Hybrid working arrangements are different for everyone and for every team. They depend on operational and business needs, capacity in the workplace, the work being done by each person and team and where it is most effective to do that work. Equity considerations also need to be considered in terms of staff who do not have the ability or opportunity to operate in hybrid arrangements, such as nurses.

With a large and geographically distributed workforce, CHS relies on Staff Bulletins to communicate with workers on a range of subjects including information pertaining to WHS. All information related to the COVID-19 response is available on the intranet via COVID-19 information (sharepoint.com).

4. Our Focus

Consultation and communication of WHS matters with workers, volunteers, contractors, and end users (e.g. patients and consumers) is required under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and is an integral part of managing WHS risks at CHS. Maintaining the health and safety of our people and the community while performing our work functions remains our core objective. The focus of this plan is to articulate CHS's intentions for safe and sustainable arrangements for a return to the workplace. Specifically, a return with higher levels of staffing capacity in the workplace in line with capacity ratios based on the latest COVID-19 restrictions within ACT.

The plan acknowledges that flexible work arrangements are still available to staff and is one of the options the plan adopts to manage COVID-19 outbreaks in the community. It also recognises the possibility of future cases of COVID-19 in the community or workplace and ensures that CHS is ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively, and efficiently, and in a way that is consistent with advice from health authorities and whole of government advice. This includes being ready to reduce numbers in the workplace should the transmission risk increase.

5. COVID-19 Transition Risk Assessment

The CHS Workforce – return to the workplace risk assessment:

- • assesses the risks arising from the exposure to, or transmission of COVID-19

- • identifies workers who are at risk of exposure;

• determines the source of the risk;

• identifies relevant controls;

• incorporate mental health and wellbeing supports and responses;

• reviews and check effectiveness of the controls

• assesses new hazards arising from the change in working environment (e.g. working from home); and

• assesses requirements for vulnerable workers.

5.1 Staff Safety and Wellbeing to Remain at the Forefront

The ACT Government and CHS have put a number of initiatives in place to ease the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and wellbeing of team members. See below for more information. Visit the MyHealth page for more general information on staff health and wellbeing at CHS.

Support Services

- **All staff** – can access confidential one-on-one support from the Employee Assistance Program on 1300 687 327 for yourself and members of your immediate family for any work or personal challenges. For a range of resources go to the Converge EAP coronavirus resource and support hub.
- **Managers** – vast resources have been developed to support staff, however, the volume and choice can be overwhelming when you are really busy, which is why we've developed the **Manager Wellbeing Information Line. Call 512 41753** to speak to one of the Workforce Culture and Leadership (WCL) team who will help you navigate and access resources to address the needs of you and your team at this time. Converge EAP also offer a **Manager Assist Hotline** on 1300 687 327 for coaching and support on managing your teams or you can view their resources online.
- **Team members in COVID-19 high risk areas** – We've had some great feedback on the new EAP provider, Converge, in supporting our teams deal with critical incidents. If your team are impacted by the challenges of continually responding to the pandemic and would like to arrange on-site group support, please contact CHS.MyHealth@act.gov.au or call Sue-ella McGufficke on 512 49568. For more support services visit Support for Staff.

6. COVID-19 Vaccination requirements for CHS staff

This section provides information relating to COVID-19 vaccination requirements for existing and future CHS staff following removal of the Public Health Direction (PHD) which may result in unvaccinated staff or staff without up-to-date vaccinations (as guided by ATAGI) attending the workplace.

Vaccination against COVID-19:

- Provides individual protection against severe effects of COVID-19;
- Protects the community by reducing the spread of the disease and reducing the risk of infection; and
- Reduces the health, social and economic impacts on communities due to a reduced likelihood of outbreaks, hospitalisation and healthcare needs, and the need for social and business restrictions.

There is a risk to staff, patients, and others of CHS staff who are **unvaccinated or not up to date with vaccinations** returning to the workplace resulting in increased COVID transmission exposure and associated adverse staff/patient outcomes e.g. serious illness for unvaccinated and vulnerable persons.

The risk matrix (Appendix A) outlines the requirements for Tier-1 and Tier-2 staff to maintain up to date COVID-19 vaccinations in accordance with ATAGI recommendations.

6.1 Four-tier system for identifying staff who require mandatory COVID-19 vaccination

- Tier 1 = work where employees are required as part of their duties to interact with people with an increased risk of being infected with COVID-19;
- Tier 2 = work where employees are required to have close contact with people who are particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of COVID-19;
- Tier 3 = work where there is interaction or likely interaction between employees and other people such as patients, other employees or the public in the normal course of employment;
- Tier 4 = work where employees have minimal face to face interaction as part of their normal employment duties.

6.2 Mandatory information required from Tier-1 and Tier-2 workers

All Tier-1 and Tier-2 workers must provide information by one of the following options:

1 - Evidence of COVID-19 Vaccination; OR

2- An approved Exemption; OR

3- A declaration stating that they have made the choice to not receive any COVID vaccination.

Collection

Evidence of vaccination status is from the following sources:

- The Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)

- Vaccination Information Management System (VIMS)
- Medicare COVID-19 Digital Certificate (PDF)
- Medicare Immunisation History Statement (PDF)
- An approved exemption
- A statement from the employee advising intention to not comply with the procedure.

The evidence can be provided in several ways:

- Providing consent to CHS to access either the Vaccination Information Management System or the Australian Immunisation Register to confirm and validate vaccination status
- A PDF download from MyGov or Medicare emailed to CHS Vaccination Status: CHS.COVIDvaxstatus@act.gov.au

More information about sourcing and providing the correct evidence can be found here.

6.2 Exemptions

Some Workers may be unable, due to a medical contraindication, to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. In these instances, CHS may exempt a person (in writing) from mandatory vaccination who:

a. is unable, due to a medical contraindication, to receive any COVID-19 vaccination; or for whom any COVID-19 vaccination is not reasonably available.

Exemptions will not be considered for health care workers who hold a conscientious objection to the COVID-19 vaccination, and who refuse to get vaccinated on these grounds.

Further information regarding exemptions is available (insert procedure).

7. Information for Staff

CHS is required under work health and safety legislation to take all reasonably practicable steps to protect the health and safety of employees and to consult with you in identifying and addressing risks. To do this we are following advice from ACT Health, keeping you informed, seeking your input where it's needed and providing information and support to manage risks and look after our wellbeing.

As ACT Government employees, we all have responsibilities under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that we do not do anything that creates, or increases, a risk to the health and safety of others. In the context of COVID-19, this means following directions from our workplace.

7.1 Hybrid Working and Return to the Workplace

Many CHS staff have been working from home as one of the measures in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the ACT. As the situation changes, there will be a gradual return to usual workplaces in line with the easing of public health restrictions. As CHS embraces more flexible ways of working, a return to offices for many of us will be part of a hybrid working arrangement.

A hybrid working arrangement means that there are some days or time working in the usual work location, such as the office, and some time working elsewhere in another approved location, such as from home. Hybrid working arrangements are different for everyone and for every team. They depend on operational and business needs, capacity in the workplace, the work being done by each person and team and where it is most effective to do that work. Hybrid working requires new ways of doing things to work in a healthy and safe way and look after our wellbeing.

Any change at work can be challenging. It requires new ways of doing things, new ways of communicating, new technology and new routines. After a period of changed working arrangements, a return to the usual workplace might feel strange. It's important that you feel supported in your gradual return to your usual workplace and that you seek help early if you are having any difficulty.

Arrangements will be different for each team. Some examples a gradual return might be managed include rostering to attend the workplace on different days or staggering start times.

> [Managing a gradual return to the workplace](#)
> [Working effectively with hybrid arrangements](#)

7.2 Mental Health and Wellbeing

[ACTPS COVID-19 WHS workplace resource the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and promoting worker mental wellbeing .pdf](#)

8. Information for Managers

Any change at work can be challenging. Some of your team may be looking forward to returning to attending the workplace, whilst others may find the prospect of this confronting, anxiety-provoking and challenging. People might have different reasons for their level of comfort with a gradual return to the office, based on their health status, their usual role at work, the status of COVID-19 in the community or their previous working arrangements.

[Managing a gradual return of your team](#) provides guidance on putting arrangements in place, preparing, and supporting your team and tips for looking after yourself. Additional assistance in supporting and leading your team through a gradual return to the workplace is available from the free and confidential [Manager Support Service](#). Also refer to [Leading a team through COVID-19](#) for more ideas, guidance and resources.

9. Workplaces

During COVID-19, CHS must have measures in place for all workplaces to:

- **ensure they are safe** by regularly assessing the COVID-19 WHS risks

- **address WHS risks,** including the risks of employees contracting COVID-19 and the risks associated with changes to working arrangements in response to the pandemic
- **consult** with employees about risks and health and safety measures
- **respond** as public health requirements change
- **communicate** about changes to working arrangements and other matters that affect employee health, safety, and wellbeing.

9.1 Pandemic Safe Checklist

The pandemic safe checklist (PSC) is designed to ensure all work areas maintain a COVID-19 safe environment for staff (including students and contractors), patients and visitors across CHS. It is the responsibility of each work area to ensure a PSC is completed quarterly and an up to date 'green tick' is on display in the work area. Refer to Pandemic Safe Checklist.

10. Relevant ACTGOV Resources

Resources are available to support workers, managers, and workplaces to meet the requirements of the ACTPS COVID-19 safety transition plan policy.

11. CHS COVID-19 Resources

Appendix A – OPTION 1- CHS Workers COVID-19 Vaccination Risk Matrix

COVID-19 transmission risk in the workplace Risk to CHS staff	Low risk – Tier 4 Work where employees have minimal face to face interaction as part of their normal employment duties. *Includes administration staff in non-clinical areas, staff working from home or in hybrid arrangements.*	Medium risk – Tier 3 Work where there is interaction or likely interaction between employees and other people such as patients, other employees or the public in the normal course of employment. *Includes staff, volunteers, contractors, permitted persons* and others working in clinical areas for short durations only.*	Medium-high risk – Tier 2 Work where employees are required to have close contact with people who are particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of COVID-19. *Includes all staff working in patient facing roles.*	High risk - Tier 1 Work where employees are required as part of their duties to interact with people with an increased risk of being infected with COVID-19. *Includes all frontline staff working in high-risk areas and / or with at-risk patients (e.g. ICU, ED, 14A/B).*
Contact with patients and others in CHS workplaces	Transient, less than 5 mins, less than 1.5m **OR** Less than 2 hours distanced contact greater than 1.5m in a non-enclosed space or large room (e.g. meeting or conference room)	Non-transient contact greater than 5mins and less than 15 minutes, face-to-face contact within 1.5m. **OR** More than 2 hours but less than 4 hours and distanced contact greater than 1.5m in a non-enclosed space or large room (e.g. meeting or conference room)	Face-to-face patient contact within 1.5m and between 15 minutes and 60 minutes e.g. direct patient care, meeting in small office or tearoom **OR** More than 4 hours and distanced contact (greater than 1.5m) in a non-enclosed space or large room (e.g. meeting or conference room)	Prolonged fact-to-face contact with patients within 1.5m and greater than 60 minutes per shift (cumulatively) **OR** Aerosol generating procedures or symptoms/behaviours e.g. persistent coughing **OR** Prolonged clinical procedures **OR**

	Low risk – Tier 4	Medium risk – Tier 3	Medium to high risk – Tier 2	Contact with multiple COVID-19 cases / suspected cases / probable cases
Mandatory up to date COVID-19 vaccination required	No	No	Yes Ability to comply with any requirement to work in health or aged care sectors, including having received a current course of an approved COVID-19 vaccine or holding an approved exemption (where applicable).	Yes Ability to comply with any requirement to work in health or aged care sectors, including having received a current course of an approved COVID-19 vaccine or holding an approved exemption (where applicable).
Up to date COVID-19 vaccination recommended	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls in place to protect staff, patients and others	**Low risk – Tier 4**	**Medium risk – Tier 3**	**Medium to high risk – Tier 2**	**High risk – Tier 1**
PPE including surgical mask	Yes	Yes	Yes – when in non-clinical areas	Yes – when in non-clinical areas
PPE including P2/N95 mask and eye protection	Yes – if entering a clinical area	Yes – if entering a clinical area	Yes – at all times in clinical areas	Yes – at all times in clinical areas
RATs available in the workplace	Not required	Not required	No	Yes
Prompt PCR testing available if required	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Environment controls included in Pandemic Safe Checklist	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Permitted persons include the following people:

    a.   A person who is a family member or friend of a patient;
    b.   An ad hoc volunteer;

c. Any of the following in-reach service providers or contractors, unless they are employed or otherwise engaged, including in a regular and systematic way whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, by the owner or operator of a healthcare facility:
i.   A delivery driver or person providing one-off trade deliveries;
ii. A tradesperson or contractor who attends to provide urgent maintenance or repair services, or otherwise on a non-systematic basis;
iii. A patient's personal minister / pastoral care worker or clergy who is not engaged as a contractor by the **health care facility** and attends on an irregular basis; or
iv. A legal practitioner;
v.   A guardian for a patient at a health care facility

12. Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Legislation

- Enterprise agreements
- Public Sector Management Act 1994 (ACT);
- Public Sector Management Standards 2016 (ACT);
- *Fair Work Act* 2009 (Cwlth);
- Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (Cwlth);
- Anti-discrimination laws;
- Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT);
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT);
- *Privacy Act* 1988 (Cwlth);
- Information Privacy Act 2014 (ACT); and
- ACT Public Health Directions

This guideline should be read together with other ACT Public Sector policies, procedures, and guidance:

- ACTPS Implementing a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy
- ACTPS COVID -19 Vaccination Exemption Policy
- COVID-19 Work health, safety, and wellbeing information for the ACTPS
- COVID advice for ACTPS employees
- ACTPS WHS response to COVID guide

- COVID WHOG WHS Risk assessment
- ACTPS Medical Redeployment Policy
- ACTPS Loss of Eligible Person Status Policy