

COVID-19 changed public health advice and ACTPS WHOOG COVID-19 WHS policy and guidance review

May 2022

As of 26th April 11:59pm, public health directions in the ACT have changed. Household contacts of known cases of COVID-19 are no longer required to quarantine for 7 days, provided they are asymptomatic and adhere to certain criteria. Household contacts are required to reduce movement in the community, work or study from home where possible, wear face masks in indoor spaces other than their home and undertake COVID-19 tests at intervals in the 7 days post exposure or positive test result.

This change in the public health directions has the potential to change the work health and safety response in our workplaces and a review of the existing whole of Government WHS policy and guidance material is underway. Workplaces should also consider and review their local WHS response and arrangements. Whilst the review of the WHS response is underway and to enable appropriate consultation and engagement with the workforce to occur, the existing WHS arrangements will remain in place. The ACTPS COVID-19 WHS response is detailed on the [WHS during COVID-19 SharePoint site](#).

Any public health directions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 will be considered in the context of the ACTPS workforce. The public health direction states that the risk to the community of COVID-19 has not changed despite the changed in public health requirements. The whole of Government advice will consider the risk profile and the impact of the changed public health direction on the WHS response. Directorates and agencies of the ACTPS will continue to be supported to protect their workers with whole of Government WHS and wellbeing resources, guidance, and tools. Directorates and agencies must also consider the unique risks to their workforce and review and implement appropriate local control measures.

Policy/guidance	Changes in public health directions that impact on document/s	Aspects of document/s that will not be impacted by changes to public health direction	Proposed changes to document/s for the ACTPS and rationale
Vulnerable worker guidance	Household contacts who are asymptomatic and adhere to certain criteria are no longer required to quarantine for 7 days. Increased potential risk that vulnerable employees could be exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace.	Continued protection of vulnerable workers required by workplaces through discussion with employees to implement reasonably practicable measures such as changed work design, redeployment and working from home.	Guidance materials will be updated to refer to protection of vulnerable workers, align to current health advice and reduce the risk of exposure in response to changed health advice.
ACTPS workplace exposure risk matrix and resources	Household contacts who are asymptomatic and adhere to certain criteria are no longer required to quarantine for 7 days. Increased potential risk of a household contact, who attends the workplace, becoming COVID-19 positive and exposing other employees.	Workplace exposure risk categories and examples (noting amendment to workplace and employee actions) Ongoing requirement for COVID-smart controls. Reference to health advice. Requirement to get tested if symptoms develop.	High risk category employee and workplace action advice to align with household contact advice on the ACT Health website, including testing requirements where attendance at work is required one off/ongoing. All health advice to align to changes and new links. Require moderate risk contacts to undergo a test and receive a negative result prior to attending work (unless they are unable to WFH) noting that they should be minimising movement while awaiting result. Undertake risk assessment for a moderate risk worker who must attend workplace during period of waiting for test result. Remove reference to standing exemptions.
Rapid antigen testing	For a household contact to attend work they must comply with testing requirements for the 7 days that	Privacy of results Design of test on arrival programs	Guidance/process needs to be considered for the provision of rapid antigen tests by the workplace where a worker who is a household contact, who meets the ACT Health criteria, is required, and there is mutual agreement,

	<p>they would have previously been required to quarantine.</p> <p>Testing is required in 24hrs prior to attending essential work and/or work unable to be performed at home, and every 48 hrs where attendance is required ongoing.</p> <p>Rapid antigen or PCR accepted as a COVID-19 test.</p>		<p>to attend the workplace during the 7 days they would previously be required to quarantine (as a one-off or ongoing).</p> <p>The guidance must link with other guidance material that seeks to ensure that where possible, a worker who is a household contact, is supported to work from home.</p>
Face masks	<p>Face masks are only required in some settings and to be worn indoors by asymptomatic household contacts who are unable to work from home/when conducting essential tasks.</p>	<p>Face masks are required indoors in ACTPS workplaces.</p> <p>All other COVID-smart controls remain.</p>	<p>Face masks continue to be required indoors in ACTPS workplaces to reduce the risk of transmission.</p> <p>Face masks are a key mitigation control in the ACT Health workplace exposure tool.</p>
Hybrid work	<p>No impact on current guidance.</p>	<p>No impact on current guidance.</p>	<p>No changes proposed.</p>
Working from home	<p>Household contacts should work from home where they can.</p>	<p>No impact on current guidance.</p>	<p>No changes proposed.</p> <p>Reinforce business continuity to be prepared and where possible, support workers to work from home if they are a household contact.</p>
Using vehicles	<p>Face mask wearing indoors for household contacts.</p> <p>Limit contact with others.</p>	<p>All other COVID-smart controls remain including cleaning and mask wearing.</p>	<p>Amend to require a worker who is a household contact of a known case of COVID-19 not to transport passengers, or be a passenger, in ACTPS vehicles during the 7-day period after the person in their house tested positive to reduce the risk of transmission. Only essential travel to occur with a risk assessment for household contacts.</p>
Meetings and events	<p>Household contacts would be permitted to attend meetings if they meet certain criteria.</p>	<p>All COVID-smart controls and the risk assessment process prior to scheduling a meeting/event.</p>	<p>Amend to require those who are a household contact of a known case of COVID-19 to attend meetings virtually, or to postpone their attendance, during the 7 days after the person in their house tested positive. This will reduce the risk of exposure to others in a setting where transmission is more likely to occur.</p>
Managing cases of COVID-19 in ACTPS workplaces	<p>Household contacts who are asymptomatic and adhere to certain criteria are no longer required to quarantine for 7 days.</p> <p>Increased potential risk of a household contact, who attends the workplace, becoming COVID-19 positive and exposing other employees.</p>	<p>Ongoing requirement for COVID-smart controls.</p> <p>Reference to health advice.</p> <p>Requirement to get tested if symptoms develop.</p>	<p>All health advice to align to changes and new links.</p>

ACTPS COVID-19 WHS guide	Household contacts who are asymptomatic and adhere to certain criteria are no longer required to quarantine for 7 days. Increased potential risk of a household contact, who attends the workplace, becoming COVID-19 positive and exposing other employees.	Core COVID-smart controls including cleaning, physical distancing, ventilation, not attending work when unwell, hygiene etc.	Overall review to align with public health directions including chapters on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face masks • Managing cases of or exposure to, COVID-19 in ACTPS workplaces • Workplace exposure • Vulnerable workers • Rapid antigen testing.
Mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19	No impact on current guidance.	No impact on current guidance.	No changes proposed.
COVID-19 risk register and situational risks	Household contacts who are asymptomatic and adhere to certain criteria are no longer required to quarantine for 7 days. Increased potential risk of a household contact, who attends the workplace, becoming COVID-19 positive and exposing other employees.	Core COVID-smart controls including cleaning, physical distancing, ventilation, not attending work when unwell, hygiene etc.	Review and update to align with above.
Ventilation	No impact on current guidance.	No impact on current guidance.	No changes proposed.
Workers' compensation	No impact on current guidance.	No impact on current guidance.	No changes proposed.
COVID-19 vaccination	No impact on current guidance.	No impact on current guidance.	No changes proposed.