



Community Nursing BULLETIN No. 23

19 August 2020

FOR DISTRIBUTION TO ALL DVA COMMUNITY NURSING STAFF

This Bulletin is being issued to provide an update to Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Community Nursing (CN) providers.

COVID-19 UPDATES

Department of Health

The Department of Health (DoH) provide regular updates and information on COVID-19 for the health and aged care sector including specific advice and resources for health care workers:

- [working arrangements](#)
- [hygiene and cleaning](#)
- [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- [mental health](#)
- providing health care [face to face](#) and [remotely](#)
- [providing aged care services](#)
- [resources for health care professionals](#).

The DoH also publishes a [daily health alert regarding COVID-19](#) on its website, which provides a range of information and advice about the virus, including what the Government is doing.

Access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

DVA is being guided by information and advice provided by the Australian Government Department of Health (DOH). The latest information is available on their website at: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

Providers who use PPE as a regular part of their support arrangements should continue to access PPE through their usual means or through providers they use.

Where this is no longer possible, and there is a clinical need, they should approach the National Medical Stockpile.

DVA is not able to fund or provide PPE separately to the National Medical Stockpile.

The Australian Government is prioritising PPE distribution from the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) to aged care services that are most in need.

To ensure PPE from the NMS is effectively prioritised on a needs-basis, providers are being asked to complete a new Aged Care PPE Request Form. This form will be sent to you via email after an initial inquiry is made via the agedcarecovidppe@health.gov.au email address.

Providers will be asked a number of questions relating to their PPE needs, including staff numbers (or home client visits per day), number of care recipients, PPE supplies on hand, and PPE requirements. It is recommended someone with an appropriate level of operational knowledge complete the form.

If you have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, a case manager will work with you on your PPE requirements.

At this stage, generally only masks are being distributed to residential and in home aged care services who are in a priority category.

A priority category is a residential or **in home aged care service** who:

- cannot access PPE through their usual means, and
- the Australian Government or State or Territory Government requires workers to wear masks in relation to a community transmission region, or
- they deliver personal care or other activities that require close physical contact, where:
- there is an outbreak or suspected case of COVID-19 or another notifiable infectious respiratory disease, or
- there is an immediate threat to the continuity of safe quality care due to a lack of access to PPE supplies.

Providers should also continue to try to source the PPE through suppliers while awaiting a response. Providers need to establish an ongoing general PPE supply.

In the absence of a vaccine for COVID-19, preventing exposure is the single most important step that any of us can take to protect ourselves and others from contracting this virus.

Providers should be undertaking routine screening of staff and visitors on entry irrespective of size or location of the premises. It is especially important for residential services located in communities (and/or drawing their staff from communities) where there is a local cluster of people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, or which are considered to be at higher risk of an outbreak.

Advice for home care service providers

As COVID-19 outbreaks in Victoria and now in NSW continue to emerge, it is crucial that all home care service providers maintain vigilance to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into their services.

Given the current risk of COVID-19 now in the community, NSW Health recommends the implementation of the following measures:

- Any staff with fever or respiratory symptoms, even mild, **should be excluded** from work. They should be advised to isolate at home and seek COVID-19 testing.
- Any staff who have been in Victoria in the last two weeks **should be excluded** from providing home care services.

- Any staff who reside in the Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, Wingecaribee and Wollondilly local government areas, **must wear a surgical mask while providing services** until at least the end of July.
- When providing care to clients who live in, or have visited the above local government areas, staff **must wear a surgical mask while providing services** until at least the end of July.
- Staff actively ask clients about symptoms on arrival. If staff become aware of a client with symptoms, that client should be isolated from others, and arrangements made for COVID-19 testing.

Read Dr Kerry Chant's letter to in-home care providers [here](#).

Veteran access to Personal Monitoring Technology

DVA has a range of personal monitoring technologies available to eligible veterans and widow/ers. This is funded through the [Rehabilitation Appliances Program](#).

Accessing and installing a personal monitoring system may be suitable for older veterans and widow/ers if they are self-isolating to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19.

DVA veterans and widow/ers can access fully-monitored 24-hours a day, seven days a week personal response systems in their home or as mobile pendant personal response devices that are designed to keep them safe at home and when out and about. The initial and ongoing costs are covered by DVA if these devices are arranged through DVA.

For further information visit the [DVA website](#) or call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 376)

Open Arms counselling

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on all of our lives, and is leaving some people with feelings of anxiety, worry, stress or fear. To support veterans and their families during this time, [Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling](#) remains open.

If any DVA clients or their families need someone to talk to, Open Arms Client Assist Contact Centre is available 24/7 by calling 1800 011 046.

This service is free and confidential and there will always be someone available to answer the call.

COMMUNITY NURSING UPDATES

Community Nursing enquiries

Thank you to everyone who has been emailing their enquiries to nursing@dva.gov.au

If your enquiry is related to a Medicare claim, please contact Medicare enquiries on 1300 550 017 (option 2) in the first instance to resolve any issues.

Alternatively you can contact DVA Provider enquiries on 1800 550 457.

Secure emails

When emailing any client information to DVA, please ensure this is done by secure email. If you do not have access to this, please send a 'secure email registration request' to nursing@dva.gov.au or

to exceptional.cases@dva.gov.au for Exceptional Case applications and we will assist you with setting up secure email.

When we send secure emails, you will receive an email from DVA advising that you have received a secure message. The email will appear in your mailbox with a 'from' address in the format 'name@dva.gov.au' and will have a classification of SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive. Open the attachment to the email that is called 'SecureMessageAtt.html' and follow the instructions to retrieve and open the mail (an account will need to be created to access the mail). Client information can then be sent via secure email through the created account.

If you are already a registered user, that is, you have received a Sensitive email from DVA previously, then enter your password in the Login screen as prompted and the Sensitive email will be displayed in the browser window.

Exceptional Case applications

When submitting an Exceptional Case application, we require the form to be completed in full and signed by the Registered Nurse. Where supporting documentation is requested, please ensure this is submitted with the application. When complete information is not submitted, we will send you a letter advising we are unable to process the application, requesting that you submit the information within seven business days.

If you receive an Unable to Process letter in relation to an Exceptional Case application please ensure that you provide the requested information within seven business days so that the team can continue to process the application.

If you have sent in an Exceptional Case application to exceptional.cases@dva.gov.au and have not received an outcome or Unable to Process letter within 14 days, please send a follow up email to the above email address requesting confirmation that the application was received.

Claiming update

Claiming item NA02 for the development of individual pandemic plans will not be rejected where item NA02 has been claimed for the same client in the previous 12 months. The business rules have been updated in our system to allow for this to occur. Similarly, claiming item NA02 for future annual review assessments will not be rejected.

Provider contact details

If you have any changes to contact or other details, please contact the Community Nursing Contracts team via email at: Community.Nursing.Contracts@dva.gov.au

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INFORMATION

Dementia training and education for aged care staff

[Dementia Training Australia](#) (DTA) and the University of Tasmania's [Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre](#) both offer courses on dementia and dementia care that are accessible to all aged care staff.

[DTA](#) delivers a range of free online educational resources and training for individuals and government subsidised tailored training for organisations. There is training to suit new starters up to experienced health professionals.

The Wicking Dementia Centre's free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) *Understanding Dementia*, is open for [enrolments now](#). More information is available [here](#).

Wound Awareness Week

Wound Awareness Week is from 17 – 23 August 2020 with the spotlight on the hidden affliction of chronic wounds and calls for action to reduce harm. Every year over 420,000 Australians suffer from a chronic wound, costing the health and aged care budgets more than \$3 billion and individual sufferers thousands of dollars annually.

Wound Awareness Week provides a great opportunity to spread awareness of what wounds are, who is at risk and what someone can do if they have a wound that won't heal. This year the focus will be on:

- Issues and treatments for wounds caused by the use of Personal Protective Equipment
- Chronic wounds
- Pressure injuries
- Venous leg ulcers

Think about getting your teams together and start a conversation about hard to heal wounds.

You can access the website www.woundaware.com.au and download resources for both clients and health care workers. You can also register for the free webinars held during the week:

- 17 August - Our new reality working in a COVID-19 world
- 19 August - Venous leg ulcers
- 21 August - What's so bad about callous

For further information, refer to the website [Wounds Australia](#)