



# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) INFORMATION FOR PERMANENT AGED CARE RESIDENTS

## Emergency Leave

14/08/2020

Recent legislation changes have introduced a new emergency leave provision. Permanent aged care residents can now take temporary leave from an aged care home during an emergency situation. This could include disasters (natural or otherwise), pandemics or epidemics.

In the event of an emergency situation the Government will decide:

- that an emergency exists
- the area of impact
- the duration of the emergency.

The new leave provision means that, in the event of an emergency situation, residents will not need to:

- use their social leave entitlements
- pay their aged care provider further fees to secure their place.

The Government, through the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, has determined the COVID-19 pandemic is an emergency situation. The period of this emergency is from 1 April 2020 until 30 September 2020. Emergency leave is now available for permanent aged care residents during this period. This fact sheet is to assist permanent residents and their families to understand the impact of these changes.

## Use of emergency leave during the COVID-19 pandemic

You can use the new emergency leave to take temporary leave from your aged care home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government has determined this emergency leave:

- covers all permanent aged care residents from all services across Australia
- dates back to 1 April 2020
- is available until 30 September 2020.

You cannot take emergency leave for the COVID-19 pandemic outside of these dates.

## Do I have to pay any fees while on emergency leave?

When you take emergency leave you must continue to pay your:

- basic daily fees
- means tested care fees
- daily accommodation payments.

This is the same as when you take social leave.

During this time, the Government will continue to pay the aged care subsidy to your provider. You won't pay further fees to retain your place at the aged care home.

Discuss with your aged care home any concerns around paying these fees, including if you experience financial hardship.

## Can I take emergency leave now?

Yes. If you feel safer staying with family who can provide you with care, you can take emergency leave. The current pandemic is an emergency situation. Emergency leave is available from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020.

If you wish to take leave from your aged care home you should:

- speak with your aged care provider
- tell them that you wish to take emergency leave.

## Can I use emergency leave for a hospital stay?

No. Emergency leave does not cover hospital stays. If you are admitted to hospital during the emergency leave period you must take hospital leave while in hospital.

## What if I have used my social leave and exceeded my allocated days during the COVID-19 pandemic?

You may have taken social leave because of the COVID-19 pandemic. You can use emergency leave for leave taken from 1 April 2020 until 30 September 2020.

Emergency leave does not apply to any leave taken before 1 April 2020.

The emergency leave period ends on 30 September 2020. After this date, all residents will have a full 52 day social leave balance for the 2020-21 financial year.

## I have exceeded my social leave balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. What if I have paid fees to the aged care home in order to keep my place?

You may have taken social leave due to the pandemic and exceeded your allocated 52 days. You may then have paid fees to retain your place within the aged care home.

Your aged care home must reimburse you for any fees you have paid for this purpose since 1 April 2020.

Emergency leave does not apply to any leave taken or fees paid before 1 April 2020.

You should discuss the reimbursement of these fees with your aged care home. Providers should refund these fees as soon as practical.

## What help is available in the home if I want to move out of my residential aged care home and live with my family during COVID-19?

There are two tiers of support available under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) to support you if you choose to temporarily move out of residential care due to COVID-19.

### **Tier 1 Clinical support for clients who temporarily re-locate from an aged care home that is significantly impacted by COVID-19**

Temporary clinical support is currently available to residents who have had to relocate from a Victorian residential aged care home. This support is the equivalent to a Level 4 Home Care Package.

If your aged care home is significantly impacted by an outbreak of COVID-19, they will advise you that this support is available if you take emergency leave.

Aged care homes cannot, however, force you to take emergency leave. It must be a voluntary choice made in consultation with your family.

You or your family can then call the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) on **1800 700 600** to discuss your care needs. OPAN can arrange for a referral to a suitable local provider to deliver clinical services in the family home for up to eight weeks.

Services that may be accessed through this program include:

- Personal Care: provides assistance to maintain appropriate standards of hygiene and grooming.
- Nursing: clinical care provided by a registered or enrolled nurse. This care is directed to treatment and monitoring of medically diagnosed clinical conditions.

Tier 1 clients are also able to access entry level:

- Meals
- Transport (essential trips to medical appointments only)
- Social Support Individual
- Unaccompanied Shopping
- Allied Health and Therapy Services.

In these cases the aged care home will need to recommend a care plan to the home support provider. They should also work with the provider to determine a suitable care start and end date.

Your family will be responsible for your care and safety during your time away from the aged care home. It is important that proper thought be given to your living arrangements. This includes considering access to mobility aids, the capacity to provide care for 24 hours per day and a suitable physical environment.

If a decision is made to relocate from your aged care home, then:

- All household members must agree to remain in quarantine for at least 14-days after you enter their household (if asymptomatic).
- You must undertake a COVID-19 test and must be found to be negative prior to returning to the community.
- You should not move in with family where anyone residing in the family home are at risk of severe illness (e.g. have an underlying health condition).
- Families must use appropriate personal protective equipment (consisting of a full body gown, gloves, face mask and eye protection) when providing direct care to you during the 14-day quarantine.

- You and your family should discuss with your aged care home what support they can provide your family in accessing personal protective equipment and any necessary mobility or toiletry aids.

If you test positive to COVID-19 you will not be able to temporarily move into the family home or return to the community.

### **Tier 2 Entry-level services for clients who voluntarily decide to temporarily re-locate from an aged care home to stay with a family member**

If you are not eligible for the complex clinical support available under Tier 1 above, but still choose to temporarily move in with family, you or your family may contact My Aged Care on **1800 200 422**. They can arrange for a referral to access entry-level home support services for up to eight weeks through the CHSP.

This support is available to all residents returning home from an aged care home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Services that can be accessed through the CHSP include:

- Meals
- Transport (essential trips to medical appointments only)
- Social Support Individual
- Unaccompanied Shopping
- Personal care
- Nursing
- Allied Health and Therapy Services.

It is important to understand that these services will be entry-level. They will not provide the same level or frequency of care available in an aged care home. If you need more complex or higher level aged care services you should remain in your aged care home.

The provision of CHSP services is dependent on the availability of individual providers. In the first instance, you or your family should contact My Aged Care to check the availability of CHSP services in your area. This should be done before you leave your aged care home.

If you decide to temporarily relocate from an aged care home where there is an active case of COVID-19, but the home does not meet the criteria for Tier 1, (i.e. they are not significantly impacted by a COVID-19 outbreak) then:

- All household members must agree to remain in quarantine for at least 14-days after you enter their household (if asymptomatic).
- You must undertake a COVID-19 test and must be found to be negative prior to returning to the community.
- You should not move in with family where anyone residing in the family home are at risk of severe illness (e.g. have an underlying health condition).

- Families must use appropriate personal protective equipment (consisting of a full body gown, gloves, face mask and eye protection) when providing direct care to you during the 14-day quarantine.
- You and your family should discuss with your aged care home what support they can provide your family in accessing personal protective equipment and any necessary mobility or toiletry aids.

If you test positive to COVID-19 you will not be able to temporarily move into the family home or return to the community.