



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

## Emergency Leave

24/09/2020

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 can 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 confirmed the COVID-19 pandemic is an emergency situation. The period of this emergency is from 1 April 2020 until 30 June 2021. 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 June 2021.

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 June 2021.

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 June 2021.

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

The emergency leave period ends on 30 June 2021.

## 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 live with my family during COVID-19?

A national model of emergency support is available through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP). This is for aged care residents who choose to take emergency leave and temporarily move out of residential care due to COVID-19.

### **Tier 1 Clinical support for residents 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 significantly impacted residential aged care home. Personal care and nursing

services equivalent to a Level 4 Home Care Package can be accessed at no additional cost.

If your aged care home is significantly impacted by a COVID-19 outbreak, they will advise 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 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 will provide information on your eligibility, things to consider and the process for temporarily withdrawing from an aged care home. If you decide to transition to the community, OPAN can refer you to a suitable local CHSP 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: assists to maintain appropriate standards of hygiene and grooming
- Nursing: clinical care provided by a registered or enrolled nurse. This care is to treat and monitor medically diagnosed clinical conditions.

No fees will be charged for Tier 1 CHSP supports.

Your aged care home will need to work with you, your family and the CHSP provider:

- To develop a care plan
- To determine a suitable care start and end date
- To plan any arrangements to transition the resident back to the aged care home.

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

Residents who require more complex or higher level aged care services may need to remain in their aged care home. They can also be temporarily transferred by their aged care home to another suitable care facility.

Residents receiving Tier 1 will also need to contact My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 to obtain the additional Tier 2 supports detailed below.

**Tier 2 Entry-level services available for all people who decide to return to the community**

If you are not eligible for Tier 1 support, but choose to return to the community, you can access CHSP entry-level home support services for up to eight weeks. This is regardless of whether your aged care home has been impacted by COVID-19. Residents who access Tier 2 services may need to pay a client contribution fee for services where they can afford to do so.

To access Tier 2 services residents or their family can contact My Aged Care on **1800 200 422**. My Aged Care will provide:

- information on the services available
- details on the process for transition to the community
- a referral to a CHSP provider.

This support is available to all residents returning to the family 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.

**Things your family must consider before transitioning out of your aged care home to the family home:**

- accommodation requirements – you will need a separate bedroom, and if possible a separate bathroom; is the bed accessible, and the correct height
- internal and external access to the home – are there stairs, is a ramp required, are doorways/hallways wide enough for a walker, are there trip hazards
- mobility aid requirements – shower chair, walker, toilet rails, transport
- 24 hour care is required to be provided by your family and can be supplemented with some professional support by a CHSP provider
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may be required if you and your family need to quarantine. Families must know how to use PPE, including gowns, face masks, eye protection and gloves. PPE must be purchased prior to you coming into the family home

- general day to day living assistance – toileting, showering, meals, dressing, administering medications
- how to manage your transition back to the aged care home.

You should not leave the aged care home until services have been put in place. You and your family should stay in close contact with your aged care home to discuss:

- your care plan
- any issues
- organising your return to the aged care home at the appropriate time.

Your aged care home and CHSP provider should also discuss your care needs and the provision of services that have been organised.

### **Other specific requirements for Victorians**

If you are from a Victorian aged care home with a COVID-19 active case, or if the aged care home is in an area with community transmission, you and **every household member** will need to quarantine for:

- 14 days after you enter the household (if asymptomatic)
- 14 days after you are released from isolation (for a confirmed case).

After the quarantine period, **all members of the household** will be need to receive a negative COVID-19 test result before leaving quarantine. Home testing can be organised through a general practitioner.

## **What happens if I do not want to go back to my aged care home?**

This support is not intended to be ongoing. If you decide to stay in the community on a long term or ongoing basis, you will need to give up your place in your aged care home. You will then need to arrange for a home care services assessment through My Aged Care. If the assessment indicates you require a Home Care Package (HCP), families should be aware that there are waiting times for a HCP.

Find more information about HCPs and average wait times on the My Aged Care website at: [www.myagedcare.gov.au/assessment-decision-home-care-packages](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/assessment-decision-home-care-packages).

Although you can access entry-level CHSP services while waiting for a HCP, once you have relinquished your place in the aged care home, you will not be eligible to continue accessing Tier 1 services. You and your family must carefully consider

whether entry level services will be sufficient to support you while on the wait list for a HCP.