



## Director-General's COVID-19 UPDATE

Deidre Mulkerin | Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

4 August 2021

Dear colleagues

Thank you for all you are doing to continue to provide essential services to vulnerable children, young people and families as we work our way through the current lockdown in South East Queensland. We are hoping that the very short-term sacrifices we are all making to halt the spread of the highly contagious Delta strain of COVID-19 will see us return to business as usual as soon as possible.

While health directives may change over the course of the lockdown period, it is imperative that our services are able to continue to meet the needs of Queenslanders in a manner that is safe and avoids a longer lockdown. For those services operating within the affected locations, you should reactivate your business continuity plans so you are prepared for any potential impacts to service delivery, and consider how you can use technology to deliver services.

I want to reassure you that my department is well prepared for all possible outcomes with regard to COVID-19. We are operating as usual and expect that as one of our funded service providers you will do the same until further advice comes to hand.

If the contracted obligations of your organisation are impacted by COVID-19, you should contact your contract manager in writing promptly to advise how service delivery has been affected and what strategies you are implementing to minimise the impact. We will work with you to manage an agreed way forward.

For residential care service providers, [COVID-19 residential care guidelines](#) are available to support you to develop and/or refine your service continuity planning and responses. The guidelines are not intended to replace existing business continuity plans already in place.

Individual Flexibility Agreements (IFA) have also been developed to enable residential care service providers to safely care for young people who have either been diagnosed with COVID-19 or need to self-isolate, and I encourage you to talk to your staff about their willingness and suitability to enter into an IFA, as part of early business continuity planning. You can find more information about the IFAs on the [Community Services Industry Alliance website](#). Please contact the Services Union for help with the IFA process. If you have any queries, please contact your regional contract officer.

For organisations providing foster and kinship care services, please remind your carers to check for updates to information on the Carer Connect app.

There are no additional or different arrangements where children are absent or missing from placement during lockdown and staff must follow existing processes. When children are





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located, it is important to check whether they have been in exposure sites at the times nominated.

You may recall that in the height of COVID and lockdowns last year, the Department of Education Regional Taskforces assisted agencies to collectively support children to attend school (where Queensland Health directives indicated it was safe to do so); and/or to access secondary service sector supports and regionally based educational supports in a timely manner. The Department of Education has advised it is proposing to stand up these taskforces again from next week in areas impacted by the lockdown, should they be required. This may result in referrals to family support services in these locations. We will provide further information as it becomes available.

For all organisations delivering services to children in care, directly or indirectly, please seek medical advice as appropriate if you become aware a child or an associated household member is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, and contact your child safety officer or the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre (freecall 1800 177 135) as soon as possible.

It is important for children to stay connected to their family and, for the period of lockdown, family contact arrangements will occur via phone or using online options such as FaceTime or Skype, rather than face-to-face arrangements. If online options are not possible, family contact will be postponed until after the lockdown, unless there are exceptional circumstances. More advice on family contact during lockdown is available on our [website](#).

We will be in contact if any of our advice changes. In the meantime, I encourage you to stay up to date with the latest [health advice](#), monitor news reports regularly for updates from the Deputy Premier and Chief Health Officer, and follow Queensland Health on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

And, as always, please take care of yourself, your family and friends, and stay safe.

Warm regards

**Deidre Mulkerin**

Director-General

Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

