



## Director-General's UPDATE

30 March 2020

Dear Carers

As I send this email to you today I hope that you, your families and the children you care for are well and coping in these unprecedented times. I want to assure you we are working very hard to keep you and your families, and the children and young people in your care, as safe as possible and I thank you for your patience as we work through these challenging times together.

Last night the [Australian Government](#) made some significant announcements regarding limits on the number of people who can come together and self-isolation recommendations regarding older people in our community. This includes people over 70 years old, over 60 years old with pre-existing conditions, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 years old.

Your health and the health of your households is very important to us and we want to provide guidance to our staff and carers, particularly regarding face-to-face family contact that is consistent with the public health messages. We know that family contact is very important for children and their parents, especially in times of anxiety and stress, and we want to do whatever possible to support ongoing communication.

Family contact will be assessed on a case by case basis. As a result of this family contact may need to occur by telephone, Skype, FaceTime, email or similar. In exceptional circumstances there may be situations where face-to-face contact will continue only if it is safe to do so and if it is critical for the child's wellbeing. Carers and parents will be consulted as part of the care team on any face-to-face contact decisions, and individual health and household considerations will be a significant factor. We know how worried both parents and carers are at this time, so communication is more important than ever. Your child safety officer will talk to you about how best to make the new arrangements for family contact.

If you are over 70 years old, over 60 years old with a pre-existing condition, or you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander carer over 50 years old, we strongly encourage you to stay home wherever possible for your own protection. This means that members of your household should limit leaving the home too to reduce the chance of transmission. While children in out-of-home care may attend school this week, we are supporting you to make the right decision for your family about whether or not children attend school or stay at home and participate in the online learning that most schools are now providing. Most child care centres are still operating, and again, this is a decision for you to make based on your personal circumstances. What we do know from our health experts at this time is that very few children contract COVID-19 or transmit it to others.

We will continue to update [our website](#) in line with the latest public health

messages. I also encourage you to download the [Carer Connect app](#) to receive notifications on these latest developments. If you have questions and need to talk to your child safety officer, we recommend you email them in the first instance, call your child safety service centre or contact the Foster and Kinship Support Line on 1300 729 309.

Thank you for your understanding as we continue to work together during this difficult and unprecedented time.

Warm regards

**Deidre Mulkerin**

Director-General

Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women



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