OPAN | Older Persons Advocacy Network   **ADAAustralia** Your aged and disability advocates

Talking to family members if residents or staff in your facility have tested positive for COVID-19

It can be confronting talking to families about loved ones residing in your aged care facility during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have every right to be worried.

By making them feel included, informed and respected, you may be able to reassure them of the quality care you're providing. You may gain more support if you take the time to talk to them by phone rather than sending impersonal emails. You could also schedule a family Zoom meeting where all families can participate and ask questions. This will help them see that you're in control, you're following processes and everything is in hand.

These two phone scripts may help

1. If a loved one has tested positive
2. If other residents or staff have tested positive

You need to be able confidently answer any questions that may come up, especially the commonly asked questions listed after the scripts. Feel free to modify the scripts for your facility's current status. You can also refer to the 'COVID-19 checklist to plan your communication' fact sheet in the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) COVID-19 Communications Toolkit. It's at **opan.com.au/covidresourcesqld** with a broad range of other COVID-19 resources.

Script 1: If a loved one has tested positive

Good morning/afternoon. Is that [name], [resident]'s [son/daughter/sibling/husband/wife/partner, etc.]? This is [your name] from [your facility].

I wanted to give you the latest update on [resident].

You'd know that we're routinely testing all residents and staff for COVID-19. I'm sorry to have to let you know that [resident] tested positive, along with X other residents and X staff. I understand this is worrying news.

Right now, [resident]'s condition is [good / concerning / under control, etc]. He/she has [describe symptoms, e.g. shortness of breath / fever / loss of smell, etc]. To keep [him/her] comfortable, we will be [describe what you're doing, e.g. transferring them to hospital]. We are doing everything we can to help [him/her].

We've been given specific guidelines to follow by [department or independent advisors]. I'll run through these with you:

[go through guidelines]

I'm sure you'll have lots of questions and concerns over the next few days and weeks. When you need to know what's happening at any time, you can contact [name] directly. Please feel free to call them anytime at all. Their number is [phone number].

We're sorry you can't visit [resident] in person, but you can still talk to them and see them. You're welcome to contact them via teleconference/Zoom/etc. Plus, we're supplying residents with [iPads/smartphones, etc] so they won't feel cut off from family. If you like you can book a call [via Calendly/reception, etc].

I probably can't answer all your questions right now, but I invite you to join us for a Zoom call with all our families on [date] at [time].
You can meet our staff and ask any other questions you may have.

I can run you through the COVID-19 procedures [facility] is taking:

[run through procedures]

Script 2: If other residents or staff have tested positive

Good morning/afternoon. Is that [name], [resident]'s [son/daughter/sibling/husband/wife/partner, etc.]? This is [your name] from [your facility].

I'm pleased to let you know that [resident] has tested negative for COVID-19.

You'd know that we're routinely testing all residents and staff for COVID-19. During these routine tests, X other residents and X staff have tested positive. I understand this is worrying news for you. We're doing everything we can to keep [resident] safe. [Resident's] health is our priority. To achieve this, we have been given specific guidelines to follow by [department or independent advisors]. I'll run through these with you:

[go through guidelines]

All residents who've tested positive [are being / have been] transferred to hospital where they can receive the best possible care, and we'll be keeping the families of all residents up to date with their progress.

I'm sure you'll have lots of questions and concerns over the next few days and weeks. When you need to know what's happening at any time, you can contact [name] directly. Please feel free to call them anytime at all. Their number is [phone number].

We're sorry you can't visit [resident] in person, but you can still talk to them and see them. You're welcome to contact them via teleconference/Zoom/etc. Plus, we're supplying residents with [iPads/smartphones, etc] so they won't feel cut off from family. If you like you can book a call [via Calendly/reception, etc.].

I probably can't answer all your questions right now, but I invite you to join us for a Zoom call with all our families on [date] at [time]. You can meet our staff and ask any other questions you may have.

I can run you through the COVID-19 procedures [facility] is taking:

[run through procedures]

Be prepared for making or taking a call

Your facility's COVID-19 response plan
★ What plan is your facility following?
★ When did you implement it?
★ What does it involve?
★ Where are you getting guidance – government departments or advisors?

Testing
★ How often do you test?
★ How long does it take to get results?
★ What are the results for both staff and residents?
★ How are you sharing the results with residents, family and staff?
★ Have you obtained permission to pass on results between residents in the facility – especially close friends?

Cohorting
★ What are your procedures around isolating i nfected residents?
★ Are you cohorting infected residents?
★ Are you also cohorting staff?
★ What is happening with infected staff?

Your staff
★ How are staff being tested?
★ What is PPE policy?
★ How many infected staff do you have?
★ Are you using agencies?
★ How you are monitoring staffing levels?
★ Are you bringing in additional staff from agencies interstate?
★ How are you training unfamiliar staff to get to know the residents?

Infection control
★ What are your PPE education and policies?
★ How are you managing bio-hazard cleaning procedures and waste management?

Hospital transfers
★ What criteria do you use to send residents to hospital?
★ Can you explain any times there have been difficulties or rejections?

Contact tracing and testing
★ How are you identifying and isolating contacts?

Be prepared for making or taking a call (continued)

Clinical monitoring

★ How are you monitoring residents, particularly high-risk or vulnerable residents?

Workforce protection

★ How are you supporting your employees' health and wellbeing?

★ How are you managing union relations?

Supplies and equipment

★ How are you procuring PPE?

★ How are you safely disposing of PPE, linen and waste?

Communications

★ What is your communications strategy? Use the 'COVID-19 checklist to plan your communication' fact sheet in OPAN's COVID-19 Communications Toolkit as a guide.

Visits

★ What is your visitation policy? Are you allowing face-to-face visits? What is replacing face-to-face visits?

★ How do families communicate with residents?

★ How do families communicate with the facility?

★ Do families have the number of a designated staff member they can call?

Home transfers

★ Has your facility been nominated to receive 8-week free home care?

★ Does the family want to transfer their loved one home?

★ Does the family need to know they can get help by calling OPAN on 1800 700 600 6am–10pm AEST?

Liaising with the government

★ Are you having meetings with and providing reports to state and federal health authorities every day?

OPAN is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health. Our role is to deliver services through a network of service delivery organisations (SDOs) based in the states and territories. In Queensland, the SDO is ADA Australia. ADA Australia provides free, confidential, independent aged care advocacy and information to older people receiving Commonwealth-funded aged care services, their families and representatives.

Contact OPAN or ADA Australia to find out more about COVID-19 resources and support for your residents and their families.

Freecall **1800 700 600**
6am–10pm AEST, 7 days

adaaustralia.com.au
opan.com.au/covidresourcesqld

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