

## Policy

Primary Care Connect (PCC) places great importance on the health and wellbeing of all employees, clients and visitors to our services. The purpose of this policy and procedure is to manage the risk relating to the exposure, handling and/or disposal of substances which carry a risk of infection.

## Procedure

Primary Care Connect (PCC) staff are requested to familiarise themselves with the following area, which address risk management of exposure to possible infectious/hazardous substances, cleaning up spills, first aid application, handling of needles, syringes and sharps and reporting possible exposure to infectious/hazardous substances.

### Prevention of Infectious Diseases

- **Hand Hygiene**
  - Staff are encouraged to wash their hands in accordance with National Guidelines. Copies of the National Guidelines are to be displayed in all bathrooms and food preparation areas
- **Food Handling**
  - Events involving the preparation and/or serving of food will be overseen by staff with an appropriate Food Handling Certificate.
- **Standard Precautions**
  - Appropriate use of standard precautions requires all staff to consider all body fluids as potential sources of infection at all times.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**
  - PPE is used in all cases where there is potential for a staff member to come into contact with blood and/or body fluids. PPE is also used when handling chemicals such as cleaning products. PPE includes:
    - gloves
    - masks
    - face and eye shields
    - gowns and plastic aprons
    - PPE is located in the Blood Spill Kit which is located in Reception.
  - Maintenance of PPE is the respective responsibility of the Systems Coordinator during a building audit or on receipt of an incident report. Any use of the Spill Kit, requires an incident and risk report, in alignment with the Incident and Risk Policy and Procedure.

### Control of Infectious Diseases

- **Send unwell people home**
  - Where safe to do so, send unwell staff or clients home, or isolate if necessary.
- **Notification of infectious diseases**
  - Notify Management and follow the Incident and Risk Policy and Procedure.
  - If unsure on notifiable diseases to authorities to contact, please seek help from [infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

## Specific Health Concerns

### Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Added March 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

PCC continues to monitor the local, national and worldwide incidents of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Staff are required to familiarise themselves with the following update. It is likely this information will change as the situation evolves and more becomes known. Any change to this information will be communicated to staff and relevant stakeholders.

These guidelines are aimed to:

- Maintain a safe and healthy workplace, including minimising the transmission of the contagious disease;
- Sustain operation continuity, where possible;
- Encourage fairness, open communication and concern for all the staff, clients and community whom we work with.

Actions to take now:

All staff are urged to take basic prevention measures to avoid exposure:

- Wash hands often with soap and running water, for at least 20 seconds.
- Dry with paper towel or hand dryer.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow.
- Isolate yourself at home if you feel sick. If you take medication ensure you have adequate supplies.
- Phone your GP first if you need medical attention. They will tell you what to do.
- Continue healthy habits: exercise, drink water, get plenty of sleep, and now is the time to quit smoking. Call the Quitline 137 848.
- Don't wear a face mask if you are well.
- Buy an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with over 60 per cent alcohol.
- Get the flu shot (available April).
- Shaking hands is optional.
- Access PCC Employee Assistance Program if required.

### COVID-19 Operational Policies

PCC places great importance on the health and wellbeing of all employees, clients and visitors to our services. In line with this, PCC will regularly revisit this policy. We are enacting these measures to address the current pandemic outbreak of COVID-19.

### Definitions

- **Self-isolation:** An employee is at risk of contracting COVID-19 through interactions with people possibly exposed to the virus, but has not been tested or diagnosed by a medical professional. It consists of a period of 14-days,

where the employee is required to remain at home, and is not permitted to return to the workplace until fit to return.

- Quarantine: An employee has been formally diagnosed with COVID-19 through testing and is required to remain at home for a prescribed amount of time by their medical professional and is not permitted to return to the workplace without medical clearance.
- Special Leave: This is extra leave granted in addition to your current entitlements. This means employees will be paid as normal for a period of special leave, with no impact on current personal or annual leave balances. The circumstance where this applies will be if you show symptoms of coronavirus and are awaiting test results. Duration of special leave will be decided on an individual needs basis by management, and test results waiting periods.

## **Self-Isolation**

### **When to self-isolate**

- Employees who have travelled overseas must isolate for 14-days on their return to Australia.
- If you have been in contact with a person known to have the COVID-19 virus, or who has returned from overseas since February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 (regardless of location).
- If no symptoms arise during this self-isolation period, they may return to work with a fit to work clearance from a doctor.
- If symptoms arise during this time (see below for employee responsibilities), see your GP for advice, testing and medical clearance. Special Leave entitlements may apply.
- If you have any symptoms (respiratory, flu like, temperature). You will be asked to go home from work, or remain at home. Special Leave entitlements may apply.

### **Leave**

- Employees must use paid personal leave for self-isolation periods, if they are not sick or diagnosed with COVID-19, when it is required or recommended by public health authority (see above for current PCC self-isolation requirements). A medical certificate will not be required for periods of self-isolation, where no symptoms have arisen.
- Employees must use paid personal leave for self-isolation or quarantine periods to care for dependants, who are not ill but need care during self-isolation.
- When an employee is required to self-isolate due to showing symptoms or pending coronavirus test results, special leave may be accessed. This includes being sent home from work due to showing symptoms. Evidence of a doctor visit must be provided (e.g., screen shot of appointment time, certificate, letter, statutory declaration). On return of a positive coronavirus test, special leave entitlements will cease and personal leave must be taken.
- Employees with insufficient personal leave may use up to five unearned personal leave days (they accrue negative leave balance for five days) for

illness, self-isolation or quarantine periods for themselves or to care for dependants.

- PCC reserves the right to recoup this time from a final paycheck of employees who terminate before they rebuild their accrued personal leave time.

**\*\*PCC are seeking advice on special leave access for staff whom are required to care for dependants in the event of a school or care facility closures in the future.\*\***

## **Travel**

### **Work-Related**

- All international travel for any employee will be suspended until further notice.
- Interstate travel that is already booked must be discussed on a case-by-case basis with Management and Executive teams
- No new interstate travel arrangements may be made until further notice.

### **Personal**

- Where an employee has booked, is booking, or is otherwise planning overseas travel to a 'risk' country for personal purposes – whether that be for a holiday or for family purposes – Employees should understand the implications this might have for them on their return from that travel, such as self-isolation, and use of personal leave.
- Employees are advised that where they choose to go ahead with their travel arrangements, any period of self-isolation or absence of work required under Victoria's Chief Health Officer's guidelines must be met from their own paid and unpaid leave entitlements. Access to paid Special Leave will not be available in this case.
- Please seek informed advice via <https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/>

### **Working Offsite**

PCC are working with health authorities to design a suitable working from home options for people required to self-isolate, or while they are caring for relatively self-sufficient dependants who are required to self-isolate. Due to the nature of work conducted at PCC, not all positions and responsibilities will be suited to working from home. This is due to cybersecurity, privacy and client need requirements. PCC are working in the best interests of the health of our staff and clients. Each request will be considered individually with Management and Executive.

- Employees currently working offsite with relatively self-sufficient dependants may continue to work as normal during self-isolation periods without the need for taking leave. For this to occur, a current working from home agreement needs to already be in place.
- Employees who are required to self-isolate, with relatively self-sufficient dependants may continue to work as normal during self-isolation periods without the need for taking leave. For this to occur, this arrangement must be reviewed on a case-by case basis by the Executive Team. They must consider the employees work responsibilities, client contact requirements, and ability to satisfy these work/business requirements. On approval a working from home agreement must be completed and signed by all relevant parties.

- Employees who are at higher risk of complications if contracted COVID-19 (advanced age, underlying health conditions, pregnant), and are seeking to work offsite, they must consult their doctor, and provide written advice from their doctor stating that it is in the best health interests to isolate for a designated period of time. This will then be discussed with the Executive team to assess, and potentially the employee will be granted permission to work from home, with the possibility of reassigned duties temporarily.
- Employees who are not in the higher risk category, but concerned with the potential for COVID-19 infection, will generally not be granted permission to work offsite or have reassigned duties.

### **Confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19**

- Any employee who has been formally diagnosed with COVID-19 through formal testing, must following their health professional quarantine instructions, and inform PCC of these and a potential return date to work.
- On return to work after diagnosis and recovery, employees must provide medical clearance.

### **Minimising Unlawful Discrimination and Vilification**

- Employers have a responsibility to ensure that employees are not unlawfully discriminated against – knowingly or unknowingly – by their managers, their colleagues or the organisation.
- Employers should remain aware of the potential for heightened unlawful discrimination in the workplace during a time of heightened public health concerns and possible pandemic. Employers should be aware that if an infectious disease originates from a particular geographical region, employees from that region (or perceived to be from – or connected to – that region) may be at an increased risk of experiencing unlawful discrimination from others.
- Employers should monitor this and intervene where necessary to remind employees and clients of their obligations to behave respectfully toward others at work.
- Any inappropriate workplace behaviour by Employees may be subject to misconduct investigation. Further, it is likely that contracting coronavirus would be characterised as a 'disability' for the purposes of anti-discrimination laws.

### **All Employee Responsibilities**

1. Employees are required to notify PCC Management of any of the following circumstances:
  - Fever (defined by a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above taken by an oral thermometer)
  - Breathing difficulties such as breathlessness
  - Cough
  - Sore throat, and
  - Fatigue or tiredness
  - Recently or planning to travel overseas (regardless of destination)
  - Have been in contact with a person infected with COVID-19
  - Have been in contact with a person who has recently travelled overseas (regardless of destination)

2. Follow all guidelines outlined by PCC in accordance with this policy and procedure around self-isolation.
3. Not return to work until either medical clearance is provided, and self-isolation period has been completed.
4. To work as normal if well, and show no signs, symptoms or contact with infected persons.
5. Do not comment or accuse people who may be unwell of having or spreading COVID-19, publicly or privately.
6. Provide clients and community with calm advice, provided by the Executive team.
7. Ensure they are seeking appropriate support for any anxiety or concerns around potential contraction of the coronavirus. Helpline advice is listed below. Employees may speak with their managers or access the PCC Employee Assistance Program.

### **Managers Responsibilities**

1. Send generally unwell people home, whom are showing respiratory illness and request they stay at home until are symptom free for 24-hours without the use of medication. It is possible for people to get a simple cold, without having to self-isolate or test for COVID-19.
2. Ensure staff who show symptoms and circumstances as in the list above comply with this policy and procedure.
3. Notification of unwell person to CEO and Manager of People and Resilience via email and update relevant people of their absence.
4. Ensure timesheets and ESP accurately display leave requirements

### **Executive Responsibilities**

1. Review the current health advice and update policy weekly
2. Communicate policy and advice changes to all staff via Yammer, email and staff meetings
3. Responsibly communicate any known and confirmed cases (without identifying an individual publicly) within the PCC office, and provide further advice in this event.

For further information on COVID-19 please visit the following sites;

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

<https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>