

Support for Aged Care Workers Needing to be Absent from Work

Overview

The Australian Government recognises Australia's aged care workers are an important part of our aged care system and supporting them during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is critical. This fact sheet provides information on support for aged care workers who need to be absent from work for COVID-19 related reasons.

Scope

This information is relevant to aged care providers and workers.

Unpaid Pandemic Leave

Aged Care sector modern awards provide for two (2) weeks' unpaid pandemic leave if an employee is required by government or medical authorities or on the advice of a medical practitioner to self-isolate and are therefore prevented from working or otherwise prevented from working due to government or medical authorities.

An employee is obliged to provide notice to their employer as soon as practicable of their intention to take unpaid pandemic leave. Unpaid pandemic leave counts as service for the purpose of calculating entitlements under the modern award and National Employment Standards.

By agreement with the employer, an employee may take more than 2 weeks unpaid pandemic leave.

The applicable aged care sector awards below have this provision:

- [MA000018: Aged Care Award 2010](#)
- [MA000034: Nurses Award 2010](#)
- [MA000100: Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010](#)
- [MA000027: Health Professionals and Support Services Award 2020](#)

Commonwealth Government Support

Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment

- The Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment is available for individuals in all Australian states and territories who need to isolate for 14 days and have no access to, or insufficient, personal (sick) leave entitlements.
- For workers whose employer is ineligible for the Supporting Aged Care Workers in COVID-19 (SACWIC) Grant, they can consider applying for the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment. Further information can be found at the [Services Australia website](#) for each state and territory.
- Workers whose employers receive funding through the SACWIC Grant to provide them with paid leave are not eligible for the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.

COVID-19 Disaster Payment

- [The COVID-19 Disaster Payment](#) is available to help workers who are unable to earn an income due to a COVID-19 lockdown, hotspot or period of restricted movement for more than 7 days.
- To be eligible for this payment, individuals need to live in, work from or have visited a Commonwealth-declared hotspot or a location subject to a state or territory restricted movement order. The individual must have had paid employment and because they were in a COVID-19 hotspot or subject to a restricted movement order cannot attend work on or after day 8 of the lockdown.
- The individual must not have any paid leave available to them nor be receiving any income support payment from the Commonwealth government. The individual must not be receiving the Pandemic Disaster Leave Payment, a state or territory pandemic payment or a state small business payment for the same period.

Support for Aged Care Workers in COVID-19 (SACWIC) Grant

- On 4 August 2020, the Department of Health opened the SACWIC Grant Opportunity on the GrantConnect website, www.grants.gov.au.
- The Grant is designed to minimise the risk of infection to aged care workers, residents and other consumers of aged care Commonwealth declared hotspots or areas of risk.
- Grant funding is available for eligible approved Residential Aged Care providers, approved NATSIFACP providers and approved Home Care providers when workers are not to attend work due to:
 - having symptoms of COVID-19;
 - being diagnosed with COVID-19;
 - being tested for COVID-19 and awaiting results;
 - attending mandatory COVID-19 testing required for aged care workers;
 - being directed to self-isolate or quarantine for a reason related to COVID-19 or
 - because of measures taken by government or medical authorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Under this Grant, providers can apply for funding to support workers:
 - who are under award wages and need to take 'Unpaid Pandemic Leave' under the award provisions.
 - to work at a single RACF site.
 - who need to take leave for testing, quarantine or self-isolation and don't have access to or adequate accrued paid personal (sick) leave provisions.
 - who need to take leave due to experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or being diagnosed as COVID-19 positive and don't have access to or adequate accrued paid personal (sick) leave provisions.
 - to be able to train additional staff where existing aged care workers are not to attend work due to self-isolation, quarantine or single site requirements.

Information for Providers

- The SACWIC Grant is open on the GrantConnect website, www.grants.gov.au, as 'GO4215 – Support for Aged Care Workers in COVID-19'. To apply, eligible providers must complete the online grant opportunity application form. They can submit applications for all current hotspots as stated in the SACWIC Guidelines until 31 December 2021.
 - If providers are not eligible for the SACWIC Grant, they should advise their workers of the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment on the [Services Australia website](#).
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State Government Support

Victoria – Government Support

\$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment

- The Victorian Government has made available the \$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment which provides financial support while workers self-isolate to wait for the results of a coronavirus (COVID-19) test.
- An individual can only receive one \$450 COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment in a 30 day period under the Department of Health directs the individual to have a test.
- For workers whose employer is ineligible for the SACWIC Grant, they can consider applying for the COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment. Further information can be found on the [Victorian Government website](#).
- Workers whose employers receive funding through the SACWIC Grant to provide them with paid leave are not eligible for the COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment.

South Australia – Government Support

The SA COVID-19 Cluster Isolation Payment is a single payment of \$300 available for eligible people who are part of a designated COVID-19 cluster and need to self-isolate while awaiting a COVID-19 test result.

- For workers whose employer is ineligible for the SACWIC Grant, they can consider applying for the SA COVID-19 Cluster Isolation Payment. Further information can be found on the [South Australian Government website](#).

Other states may also have support available: please check the relevant state government website.

Further Support from Peak/Industrial Bodies

Providers and workers can access the Guiding Principles Support Hub which has been established to provide tools and advice to assist them in understanding single site employment working arrangements. They can find further information at:

- Website and online form: supporthub.agedservicesworkforce.com.au
- Hotline: 1800 491 793 - Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.
- You may also wish to contact your Union.