

Protocol for the management of close contact healthcare workers who work in ‘Tier 2 sensitive settings’

29 April 2022



**Government of
South Australia**

Protocol providing permissions for close contact individuals working in healthcare settings to return to work

Aim of this protocol:

The [Emergency Management \(Exposure Sites, Contacts and Diagnosis Requirements No 7\) \(COVID-19\) Direction 2022](#) (the Direction) imposes testing and other requirements on people who have been present at an exposure site or had close contact with a positive COVID-19 case.

This includes a requirement that close contacts must not attend certain healthcare settings for a period of 7 days following their exposure date.

'Close contact' is defined in Direction and 'exposure date' is defined on the [SA Health website](#).

During times when South Australia is experiencing significant COVID-19 case numbers, it may be necessary for workers in these settings to attend work despite being a close contact of a COVID-19 case.

This protocol, established under s7(3)(a) of the Direction, covers settings that are defined as **Tier 2 sensitive settings** on the [SA Health website](#). It outlines the relevant provisions to return workers who are close contacts to work. These workers are referred to here as *close contact healthcare workers*.

This protocol applies to all workers who work in the relevant settings.

Close contacts

A general definition of a close contact is someone who has had close personal interaction with a person who has COVID-19 during their infectious period. The specific legal definition of a close contact is as prescribed on the SA Health website. Although this definition may change from time to time depending on the level of risk of transmission in South Australia at a point in time, the infection and transmission dynamics of the virus still pose considerable risk, and a risk-based approach to prevention should continue to be adopted, particularly in high-risk settings where there are people more susceptible to the health risks of COVID.

For more information regarding close contacts, visit the SA Health website.

Close contact healthcare worker permissions

Accessing and sustaining a skilled workforce is critical to ensure the continued provision of essential healthcare services to the community. Allowing close contact healthcare workers to continue working needs to be balanced with the risk of further disease transmission in worksites, including transmission to patients.

The Chief Executive (or equivalent) of the provider/service may implement this protocol to grant work permissions. In this situation, the following requirements must be met:

Requirements of the provider / service:

- > Keep records regarding which worker/s have been granted work permissions.
- > Consider reporting any worker permissions granted to SafeWork SA (SWSAAdvisoryCentre@sa.gov.au) within seven working days of permissions being introduced, to assist addressing any workers' concerns regarding the process.
- > Provide Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) and appropriate PPE (surgical and N95 mask, gloves etc) to allow close contact staff to remain at work.

- > Ensure returning close contact healthcare workers are meeting the requirements outlined below.

Requirements of the close contact healthcare worker:

- > Must be separated from any person who is positive with COVID-19, i.e. a close contact who lives with someone who is positive must not return to the workforce unless their living arrangements are completely segregated.
- > Must be fully vaccinated, i.e. vaccination 'up-to-date' as defined by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (including any booster doses if eligible).
- > Must be completely free of all COVID-symptoms (including headache, sore throat, runny/blocked nose, difficulty breathing, muscle or joint aches and pains, fever/chills, cough, vomiting/diarrhoea, loss of taste, loss of smell or loss of appetite).
- > Must have returned a negative PCR test prior to returning to work (if circumstances deemed exceptional, can return whilst awaiting PCR result as long as that day's RAT (Rapid Antigen Test) is negative and may continue if PCR negative).
- > Must adhere to standard close contact requirements at all times when not onsite at work.
- > Must complete a RAT at the start of every shift they attend inclusive of a daily RAT for 7 days following last contact with a case. All RATs must be negative.
- > If symptoms develop, must not attend work and must obtain a PCR test immediately (work permissions will be suspended until the PCR returns negative and symptoms resolve).
- > Must wear the appropriate PPE whilst at work (a fit-checked but preferably fit-tested N95 face masks).



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