



CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) INFORMATION FOR PERMANENT AGED CARE RESIDENTS

Emergency Leave

3/08/2020

Recent legislation changes have introduced a new emergency leave provision. Permanent aged care residents can now take temporary leave from an aged care home during an emergency situation. This could include disasters (natural or otherwise), pandemics or epidemics.

In the event of an emergency situation the Government will decide:

- that an emergency exists,
- the area of impact, and
- the duration of the emergency.

The new leave provision means that, in the event of an emergency situation, residents will not need to:

- use their social leave entitlements, or
- pay their aged care provider additional fees to secure their place.

The Government, through the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, has determined the COVID-19 pandemic is an emergency situation. The period of this emergency is from 1 April 2020 until 30 September 2020. Emergency leave is now available for permanent aged care residents during this period. This fact sheet is to assist permanent residents and their families to understand the impact of these changes.

Use of emergency leave during the COVID-19 pandemic

You can use the new emergency leave to take temporary leave from your aged care home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government has determined this emergency leave:

- covers all permanent aged care residents from all services across Australia,
- dates back to 1 April 2020, and
- is available until 30 September 2020.

You cannot take emergency leave for the COVID-19 pandemic outside of these dates.

Do I have to pay any fees while on emergency leave?

When you take emergency leave you must continue to pay your:

- basic daily fees,
- means tested care fees, and
- daily accommodation payments.

This is the same as when you take social leave.

During this time, the Government will continue to pay the aged care subsidy to your provider. You won't pay further fees to retain your place at the aged care home.

Discuss with your aged care home any concerns around paying these fees, including if you experience financial hardship.

Can I take emergency leave now?

Yes. If you feel safer staying with family who can provide you with care, you can take emergency leave. The current pandemic is an emergency situation. Emergency leave is available from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020.

If you wish to take leave from your aged care home you should:

- speak with your aged care provider, and
- tell them that you wish to take emergency leave.

Can I use emergency leave for a hospital stay?

No. Emergency leave does not cover hospital stays. If you are admitted to hospital during the emergency leave period you must take hospital leave while in hospital.

What if I have used my social leave and exceeded my allocated days during the COVID-19 pandemic?

You may have taken social leave because of the COVID-19 pandemic. You can use emergency leave for leave taken from 1 April 2020 until 30 September 2020.

Emergency leave does not apply to any leave taken before 1 April 2020.

The emergency leave period ends on 30 September 2020. After this date, all residents will have a full 52 day social leave balance for the 2020-21 financial year.

I have exceeded my social leave balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. What if I have paid fees to the aged care home in order to keep my place?

You may have taken social leave due to the pandemic and exceeded your allocated 52 days. You may then have paid fees to retain your place within the aged care home.

Your aged care home must reimburse you for any fees you have paid for this purpose since 1 April 2020.

Emergency leave does not apply to any leave taken or fees paid before 1 April 2020.

You should discuss the reimbursement of these fees with your aged care home. Providers should refund these fees as soon as practical.

What help is available in the home if I want to move out of my residential aged care facility and live with my family during COVID-19?

There are two tiers of support available under the CHSP to support residential care clients who choose to temporarily move out of residential care due to COVID-19.

Tier 1 Clinical support for clients who re-locate from a facility that is significantly impacted by COVID-19

Temporary clinical support is available to clients who have had to relocate from a Victorian residential aged care facility. This support is the equivalent to a Level 4 Home Care Package.

If a residential aged care facility is significantly impacted by an outbreak of COVID-19, clients will be advised by the facility that this support is available to them.

The client or their family can then call OPAN on **1800 700 600** to discuss their care needs. OPAN can arrange for a referral to a suitable local provider to deliver clinical services in the home for up to eight weeks.

Services that may be accessed through this program include:

- Personal Care: provides assistance to maintain appropriate standards of hygiene and grooming.
- Nursing: clinical care provided by a registered or enrolled nurse. This care is directed to treatment and monitoring of medically diagnosed clinical conditions.

In these cases the residential aged care provider will need to recommend a care plan to the home support provider. They should also work with the provider to determine a suitable care start and end date.

The client's family will be responsible for care and safety of residents during their time away from the facility. It is important that proper thought be given to their living arrangements. This includes considering access to mobility aids, the capacity to provide care for 24 hours per day and a suitable physical environment. Residents with symptomatic COVID-19 will not be released from the aged care facility.

If a decision is made to relocate a client from residential aged care, then:

- All household members must agree to remain in quarantine for at least 14-days after the resident enters the household (if asymptomatic).
- A COVID-19 test must also be undertaken and returned as negative prior to returning to the community.
- Residential aged care clients should not go into a home where anyone in the house are at risk of severe illness (e.g. underlying health condition).

Tier 2 Entry-level services for clients who voluntarily decide to return to the community

Clients of residential aged care facilities that are not eligible for the complex clinical support above, but still choose to return to the community, may contact My Aged Care on **1800 200 422**. They can arrange for a referral to access entry-level home support services for up to eight weeks through the CHSP.

This support is available to all clients returning home from a residential facility. Services that can be accessed through the CHSP include:

- Meals.
- Transport (essential trips to medical appointments only).
- Personal care.
- Nursing.

Tier 1 clients are able to access meals and transport in addition to the personal care and nursing already provided.

It is important to understand that these services will be entry-level. They will not provide the same level or frequency of care available in an aged care facility. Clients who need more complex or higher level aged care services may need to remain in their facility or another facility. Residents with symptomatic COVID-19 will not be released from the aged care facility.

Service availability is dependent on the availability of individual providers. In the first instance, families should contact My Aged Care to check the availability of CHSP service providers in your area. This should be done before a client leaves a residential aged care facility.

If a decision is made to relocate a client from residential aged care where there is an active case of COVID-19, but the facility does not meet the criteria for Tier 1, then:

- All household members must agree to remain in quarantine for at least 14-days after the resident enters the household (if asymptomatic).
- A COVID-19 test must also be undertaken and returned as negative prior to returning to the community.
- Residential aged care clients should not go into a home where anyone in the house are at risk of severe illness (e.g. underlying health condition).