

Information for parents and carers Coronavirus - COVID-19 25 March 2020

This information is for AEIOU parents and carers about how AEIOU is responding to the latest coronavirus COVID-19 developments. AEIOU is following the advice from the Australian Government's Department of Health and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. We will continue to keep you updated as the situation progresses. If you have any questions or concerns about activities at your centre, **please talk with your Centre Manager.**

1. Status of centres

Will AEIOU centres close?

At this stage, AEIOU has no plans to close any of our centres as a preventive measure. We are monitoring the situation very closely and responding based on the advice of the [Department of Health](#), and the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#). We will keep you updated as quickly as possible should the situation change.

In the event that a confirmed case of COVID-19 occurs in at one of our centres in a child, team member or parent, that centre will close immediately. In that instance, we will seek and follow the advice of the relevant state health department about:

- advice for staff, children and their families
- when the centre can reopen, and
- what needs to be done in order for that to occur.

We will keep you informed of this information as soon as we possibly can.

We also acknowledge that a centre closure may present challenges of its own, and we are working towards service modifications that enable us to best support families at home in the event of a centre closure. We will update you on this as soon as we can.

Should I plan for alternative care for my child in case my centre closes?

While we are not currently intending to close centres, we are monitoring the situation very closely as government advice is changing rapidly. You may like to consider exploring alternative care arrangements with family members and friends (who are well).

Has anyone at AEIOU (child, staff or family member) been diagnosed with COVID-19?

To date, there have been **no** confirmed cases of COVID-19 among our staff, children or families. We are aware of one staff member and one child who self-isolated due to flu-like symptoms. In both cases, they have returned **negative** results for COVID-19.

2. Should I bring my child into our AEIOU centre?

What do I do if *my child or I* test positive for coronavirus?

Do not come to the centre. Call your Centre Manager immediately.

What if *my child* has been in contact with someone (such as a family member) who has been diagnosed with coronavirus?

Seek urgent medical advice and consult with your doctor (call ahead first and explain the situation). A medical clearance from a doctor will be required before your child can return to the centre.

What do I do if *my child* has flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue, fever, shortness of breath?

Your child will need to be excluded from the centre until they are symptom-free, and taken to a doctor for treatment advice. If your child has not travelled overseas recently and has not been in contact with someone who has the virus, it is most likely that they have a common cold or influenza. You will not need to provide medical clearance from a doctor confirming your child doesn't have the virus, but they must not return until they are symptom-free.

What do I do if *I* have flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue, fever, shortness of breath?

Do not come to the centre to drop off or pick up your child until you are symptom-free. We encourage you to seek medical advice. You do not need to provide medical clearance from a doctor confirming that you do not have the virus, but you must not return until you are symptom-free.

Even if they are not showing any symptoms, your child must also stay away from the centre until you are symptom-free.

What do I do if *my child* has recently travelled (or will soon return from) overseas?

They will need to be excluded from the centre until 14 days have passed after the date of their return to Australia.

What do I do if *I* have recently travelled (or will soon return from) overseas?

You, and your child, will need to self-isolate and stay away from the centre until 14 days have passed after the date of your return to Australia, and only if you and your child are symptom-free. You do not need to provide medical clearance from a doctor confirming you don't have the virus, but you must be symptom-free to return to the centre.

What if *my child or I* have been in contact with someone (such as a family member) who has recently travelled overseas?

As long as your child is not showing any symptoms, they can still come to the centre as usual.

3. Infection control

What is AEIOU doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

At AEIOU Foundation, we are following the advice from the Department of Health, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and have put all precautionary measures in place for the welfare of our children, families and staff.

To help prevent the spread of infection, we are requiring any child, parent or staff member who has flu-like symptoms (coughs, fever, sore throat, shortness of breath and fatigue) to remain home and not return to their centre until they are symptom-free.

We have directed all centres to follow strict hygiene practices (correct handwashing, using hand sanitisers, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze), and staff are advised to encourage children to do the same – as much as is practically possible. We have increased cleaning and anti-bacterial measures at all centres. Social distancing measures have already been implemented. Many of you will have seen that workshops, meetings and events are being cancelled or postponed. Twice daily temperature checks for children and staff will be implemented shortly – more information on this will be shared soon.

How is AEIOU implementing social distancing?

To help prevent the spread of coronavirus, AEIOU is stepping up our social distancing measures in our workplaces. We have increased cleaning and anti-bacterial measures at all centres.

In addition to measures we are already practising (staying home if sick, correct handwashing, using hand sanitisers, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze), our team members have been directed to do the following:

- Don't shake hands
- Hold phone or video meetings rather than travel to other places or have people visit the centre
- Try to maintain a distance of 1.5m between yourself and others wherever practically possible (within reason, we appreciate this isn't feasible when working with children)

What if I have a concern about another child, parent or staff member who is displaying flu-like symptoms?

Please talk directly with your Centre Manager.

What can I do to avoid catching coronavirus?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Use a tissue then put it in the bin straight away.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Where possible, keep 1.5 metres between yourself and other people (within reason, we appreciate this isn't feasible when it comes to caring for children)

4. [Emotional support](#)

How do I help my family deal with COVID-19-related stress?

Everyone responds to stress in different ways. Children can be more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated. Following are some resources developed by the World Health Organisation that you may find useful:

[Talking to children about COVID-19](#)
[Coping with stress during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)

Free confidential counselling

We know many people are looking toward the future and wondering 'what if?' and as a care-based organisation we will provide you with the best support we can during this time. In addition to continuing a vigilant approach to health and hygiene, we encourage families to look after themselves and their mental health.

Please remember that **families have access to AEIOU Foundation's Employee Assistance Program through Assure**. You can access up to three sessions each year with qualified counsellors, by simply phoning 1800 808 374, and stating you are a parent at AEIOU Foundation. **This is completely confidential.**

Lifeline is also available on 13 11 14.

5. [Financial support](#)

If my child needs to stay away from the centre, what does this mean for CCS payments?

We are working with the NDIS and Department of Early Childhood to safeguard children and families as best we can, with a goal to ensure financial security for families and continuity of service at AEIOU.

If your child is displaying flu-like symptoms and staying home, then our standard policies apply to sick days. Under CCS rules, there are 62 allowable sick days (recently increased from 42) —alongside these days, you may be able to access additional days by providing medical evidence.

There is also an Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) you can explore for temporary financial hardship. It helps with short-term support if you are unable to meet the usual co-contribution to your child's fees. So, if you lose income due to an inability to attend work, this may cover out of pocket costs for up to 13 weeks.

You will need to provide evidence when applying for this assistance, such as an email from an employer. You can contact Centrelink directly for information on payments and services.

Should AEIOU Foundation be directed by the government to close all centres, the Department of Education has waived the obligation of childcare services to charge families for out-of-pocket costs. Parents in financial hardship can apply for the full fee to be covered by the CCS, so we encourage parents to do that if they are presently out of work.

Please contact our Enrolments team by phoning 1300 723 435 if you require support in this area.

If my child needs to stay away from the centre, what does this mean for NDIS payments?

We are also working with the NDIS and Department of Early Childhood to safeguard children and families as best we can, with a goal to ensure financial security for families and continuity of service at AEIOU.

For those of you who do need to keep children home due to illness or a need to self-isolate, our current approach to how we manage fees and billing will remain in place. If a child is absent and unwell, with notice provided to the centre, NDIS fees may not be incurred.

However, if a child is absent without notice, or without any illness, NDIS fees will continue to be charged at a normal rate. This includes any self-isolation or what will happen in the event of a forced centre closure (i.e. Health Department directed). However, AEIOU is working to advocate on behalf of families in an effort to safeguard children's plans and funding. This is an emerging situation and more advice will be available in the coming days and weeks.

We appreciate you may find this delay in information frustrating, however understand that these are complex decisions. We are in regular contact with the relevant decision-makers and are committed to providing accurate information as soon as it becomes available.

6. More information

AEIOU is relying on the [Department of Health](#) and the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#) for our information. The Department of Health has established a 24/7 Coronavirus Health Information Line on **1800 020 080**.

If you have any questions, please speak with your Centre Manager.