

ICAS Pandemic Management Policy

1. OVERVIEW

Pandemics are high-risk situations that develop quickly and have the potential to severely impact the health of Individualised Community Access Services (ICAS) workers (including employees, volunteers and sub-contractors), participants, and stakeholders.

The safety of participants and workers is paramount, and ICAS will respond to pandemics in a timely and effective manner.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees within ICAS.

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Notifiable Condition	A health condition that must be declared to applicable personnel under the provisions made by the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance Systems (NNDSS).
Pandemic	An outbreak of an infectious disease that affects a significant portion of the population across a large geographic area.
Social Distancing	A set of actions that are designed to increase distance between individuals to slow or prevent the spread of an infectious disease.
Social Isolation	The act of completely removing all interaction and contact with anyone outside of your household and remaining within the confines of your residence for a specific period.

In addition to the above, the Australian Government has based its pandemic responses on the WHO's Phase Descriptions outlined below.

Phase 1	No animal influenza virus circulating among animals have been reported to cause infection in humans.
Phase 2	An animal influenza virus circulating in domestic or wild animals is known to have caused infection in humans and is therefore considered a specific potential pandemic threat.
Phase 3	An animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in people but has not resulted in human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community-level outbreaks.
Phase 4	Human to human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus able to sustain community-level outbreaks has been verified.
Phase 5	The same identified virus has caused sustained community level outbreaks in two or more countries in one WHO region.

Phase 6	In addition to the criteria defined in Phase 5, the same virus has caused sustained community level outbreaks in at least one other country in another WHO region.
Post Peak Period	Levels of pandemic influenza in most countries with adequate surveillance have dropped below peak levels.
Post Pandemic Period	Levels of influenza activity have returned to the levels seen for seasonal influenza in most countries with adequate surveillance.

4. PRINCIPLES

To ensure ICAS is prepared to efficiently provide continuation of supports and services during a pandemic the following principles will apply:

- ICAS will monitor and comply with all Federal and State Government directions, legislative changes, and changes to working conditions and leave entitlements applicable to the organisation.
- Develop and implement a Pandemic Management Plan, separate to ICAS Emergency Management Plan, that specifically addresses business continuity, risk management to ensure continuity of supports and services where the workforce may be reduced, and resources limited.
- Create a centralised team of workers within ICAS to serve as a coordination and response source for workers and participants to ensure consistency in the application of the Pandemic Management Plan and associated communication strategies.
- Ensure all communication to workers, participants and stakeholders is clear, concise, and where applicable, presented in different formats and languages to increase acknowledgment and understanding within ICAS supports and services.
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality in accordance with The Privacy Policy and Procedure unless ICAS is required to inform external government agencies under the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS).
- Maintain a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment of workers and participants especially in relation to disclosed health information and tracing requirements.
- Review current working arrangements and modify where necessary, to maintain participant and worker safety. This may include alterations to service delivery and flexibility in rosters and hours of operation.
- Provide training to all workers in infection control, proper hand hygiene and the use, selection and disposal of any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Provide extra resources to workers and where applicable participants to assist in minimising the risks of infection and spread of the disease.
- Assist workers and participants in managing additional stressors related to the pandemic and provide opportunities for support, counselling, and mental health assessment and referral should these be necessary.
- Ensure continued adherence to ICAS Policies and Procedures throughout the pandemic especially those with regards to Complaints and Incidents.
- In the event of a pandemic, travel restrictions may be imposed by ICAS. The Director must approve any exceptions. Video conferencing capabilities have been established to minimise the impact of the travel restriction.
- ICAS is committed to the assessment and assurance of supply necessary to maintain our products and services. We will work closely with our business partners to ensure all our suppliers have implemented pandemic plans so that any potential impact on our participants and customers is minimised.

5. PROCEDURE

Where a pandemic is declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO), ICAS will be prepared to take immediate steps to protect the health and safety of its workers, participants, and stakeholders.

As work within the community services sector often requires close contact between workers and participants, putting in place social distancing and social isolation measures may also impact on ICAS's ability to provide services.

Therefore, ICAS will ensure that the organisations response to a pandemic is:

- Pre-planned
- Risk managed
- Flexible, and
- Person-centred

5.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGEMENT

When delivering support and services during a pandemic management must:

- Coordinate ICAS's pandemic preparedness and response through a Pandemic Management Plan.
- Undertake any managerial responsibilities specified in the Pandemic Management Plan including, as directed, any extra responsibilities that would normally sit outside their scope of duties.
- Assist in making key decisions about altering or restricting ICAS's supports and services or implementing alternate arrangements with workers and participants.
- Communicate all key decisions clearly and cohesively to ICAS's workers, participants, and stakeholders.
- Monitor federal and state government directions, legislation changes and any other organisations that govern health and/or disability services that will impact ICAS.
- Implement all applicable state, federal and agency recommendations and coordinate any lockdown measures.
- Provide resources and applicable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to assist workers in the provision of supports and services.
- Where applicable, ensure proper handwashing facilities are available to all workers and participants.

5.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORKERS

When providing services during a pandemic, workers must:

- Comply with all directions received from ICAS management regarding the pandemic.
- Communicate any organisational changes and special provisions to participants in a way that is most likely to be understood by each participant.
- Incorporate all organisational and government recommendations into support provision including:
 - Movement and travel restrictions
 - Social distancing
 - Additional hygiene measures
 - Isolation measures
- As far as reasonably possible, ensure the service provision environment is safe and remove or mitigate any factors that may make the environment unsafe.
- Monitor the health status of participants and report any changes to ICAS management for further review and possible action.
- Assist in stopping germs from entering the support provision environment by

complying with ICAS's infection control and waste management processes.

- Help participants understand how they can stop the spread of germs by using appropriate communication methods and practicing proper handwashing techniques.
- Maintain person-centred practice and ensure that the participant is always at the centre of the provision of supports and services however altered they may be.
- Report all complaints and incidents in accordance with ICAS's policies and procedures.
- Where possible, limit face-to-face contact and touching of other participants and workers.
- Monitor their own health status and act accordingly consulting with management and other workers whilst ensuring to follow any government issued directives such as self-isolation.
- Continue to acknowledge and follow ICAS's policies and procedures.

5.3 RISK MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

To ensure business continuity and as far as possible limit interruptions to ICAS supports and services ICAS has considered the following risks. Where new risks have been identified these have been added to the Risk Management Plan.

- **Health and safety risks:** When normal business operations put ICAS participants and/or workers at an increased risk of contracting an infectious disease.
- **Operational risks:** If a pandemic situation creates an environment where ICAS is no longer able to continue usual operations due to government restrictions, limited resources etc.
- **Environmental risks:** If a pandemic situation compromises the safety of ICAS service environment.
- **Economic risks:** If ICAS and its workers experience financial difficulties due to limited or ceased operations.
- **Resource risks:** If ICAS does not have enough resources such as human resources or PPE to continue normal operations due to a pandemic.
- **Compliance risks:** If a disruption to normal operations due to a pandemic lead to non-compliance with Legislation and Standards that ICAS would normally comply with.
- **Reputational risks:** If a lack of appropriate response to a pandemic impact on the way in which ICAS is perceived in the wider community.

In addition to ICAS *Emergency Plan*, a *Pandemic Management Plan* will be developed and implemented to assist with business continuity during the pandemic and ensure continuity of supports.

ICAS Pandemic Management Plan will identify:

- The key activities ICAS needs to take to prepare for a pandemic
- ICAS plan for ensuring business continuity
- How ICAS will implement the Pandemic Management Plan and who is responsible for determining when key actions and decisions are actioned
- The names contact details and roles of key workers required to ensure business continuity
- Supports and services that are deemed essential during the pandemic
- Action plans for maintaining each essential support and service
- Skillsets required to perform essential supports and services
- Any facilities required to continue essential supports services
- Participants that are most at risk
- How ICAS collaborate with other providers and community organisations

- When the Pandemic Management Plan will be reviewed to ensure currency and accuracy of information.

5.4 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Pandemic situations develop quickly as does the information and resources provided. Having a clear and consistent communication strategy is key.

ICAS will implement the following parameters to support clear and consistent messaging:

- Utilise appropriate telecommunications (email, phone, Teams, online chat etc) to:
 - Share important operational updates across the organisation
 - Implement working from home arrangements
 - Conduct meetings and appointments
- Provide relevant information to participants in a format they are most likely to understand, this may include the use of communication aids such as:
 - Easy read documents
 - Choice boards
 - Communication apps
 - Alphabet boards
- Record key events and decisions in a way that ICAS management and workers can review and reference them in the future.

5.5 RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES

Isolating a participant based on medical advice that is consistent with the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, and/or preventing that person from public gatherings that are currently limited, is NOT considered as a regulated restrictive practice.

To allow the participant to exercise choice and control over decisions that affect them during a pandemic:

- Speak with them and seek their input about sudden changes to their activities due to the measures being implemented.
- Provide them with the right information and seek their views, as this will help you develop different strategies and approaches and assist to reduce heightened emotions and behaviours.
- Share information about adjustments and changes that may happen because of medical isolation and/or due to the closure of services.

The implementation and/or management of Restrictive Practices will be implemented in accordance with ICAS *Restrictive Practices Procedure*.

5.6 INCIDENTS AND FEEDBACK

All incidents and feedback are still able to be reported through ICAS current mechanisms and will be recorded, investigated, and processed in accordance with the *Incident Management Policy*, and the *Feedback and Complaints Policy*.

Where possible, ICAS will prioritise incidents and feedback that arise because of a pandemic, as reports of this nature may be urgent and time sensitive.

5.7 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Participant privacy will always be maintained in accordance with ICAS *Privacy Policy*.

As a part of ICAS obligations under the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System

(NNDSS) information may have to be disclosed so external pandemic management procedures and contact tracing may begin. This ensures that affected person/s (either workers or participants) receive vital support they may require and assists in the protection of the community.

Where information is provided to the NNDSS, the participant and/or worker will be informed of what information has been supplied.

5.8 BASIC PREVENTION MEASURES DURING A PANDEMIC

During a pandemic ICAS recognises that it is important to maintain an elevated level of hygiene and additional precautions such as social distancing and/or isolation may be required.

In addition to ICAS existing *Infection Prevention Policy*, the following basic hygiene and cleaning measures will also be implemented and encouraged:

- Washing hands frequently as per the WHO's how to handwash guidelines
- Maintaining respiratory hygiene
- Practicing social distancing using recommendations from Commonwealth, State and/or Territory Health Departments
- Ensuring all areas are cleaned with appropriate equipment and cleaning agents
- Managing any health care waste in a safe and suitable way, seeking advice from Commonwealth, State and/or Territory Health Departments as required
- Wearing appropriate PPE when applicable

5.9 SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing involves restrictions on movement that may need to be enforced to prevent or slow the spread of a disease during a pandemic. To be effective, ICAS will ensure that all workers and participants practice social distancing.

Social distancing typically involves the following precautions although these may be subject to change as directed by Commonwealth, State and/or Territory Health Departments:

- Being always at least 1.5 metres apart from others
- Limiting unnecessary touching such as handshakes and hugging
- Where possible, limiting the number of workers on shift at one time
- Limiting face-to-face meetings where possible and using alternate methods to communicate instead such as phone calls and video conferencing
- Only going out for essential reasons such as attending work or school, purchasing essential supplies and medications, medical appointments, and personal emergencies
- Avoiding all non-essential national and international travel and any mass gatherings
- Where practicable, working from home

5.10 ISOLATION

At times, workers or participants may choose to self-isolate as they have pre-existing medical conditions that place them at high risk, or they may be advised to self-isolate to assist in the minimisation of risks that arise during pandemics.

In accordance with Commonwealth, State and/or Territory Health Departments Guidelines a worker or participant may need to self-isolate if they:

- Have been tested positive for a pandemic-level illness
- Are experiencing symptoms of a pandemic-level illness
- Have recently been in contact with someone that has tested positive for a pandemic-level illness

- Have recently travelled to a country experiencing a large-scale outbreak of a pandemic level illness

Isolation is generally completed at home however, this may be revised by Commonwealth, State and/or Territory Health Departments Guidelines to include hotels and hospitals.

Isolation risk-minimisation measures for workers and participants include:

- Limiting movements to their home environment
- Observing all recommended hygiene measures
- Practicing social distancing (as outlined above) if there are other people present in the house
- Moving quickly through or avoiding common areas
- Wearing masks and other necessary PPE as directed
- Using a separate bathroom, if available
- Using separate cutlery, linens, and towels
- Avoiding food handling and sharing
- Cleaning all shared surfaces after use to minimise the risk of contamination to others in the house

Although necessary, isolation can be a stressful experience for both workers and participants. ICAS will support workers in isolation by offering opportunities to work from home where appropriate or making appropriate leave arrangements. In addition, ICAS will provide workers with counselling and other resources as required.

ICAS will ensure in conjunction with the SIL provider that participants in isolation are still able to receive essential supports and services and they are in a comfortable, clean, and well-ventilated environment. Additional measures will also be encouraged such as keeping in touch with their support networks, practicing normal daily routines and partaking in home-based activities and hobbies they enjoy.