



Infection Prevention and Control Leads

updates for providers

What is the infection prevention and control (IPC) lead?

Effective infection prevention and control capability is critical to the safe, effective and quality delivery of personal and clinical care in aged care. This is particularly the case during the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

To ensure that residential aged care providers are better prepared to prevent and respond to infectious diseases, including COVID-19 and influenza, residential aged care providers must appoint at least one nursing staff member as an infection prevention and control (IPC) lead.

Guidance regarding the requirements of IPC lead(s) is included in the letter sent to each residential aged care provider from the Secretary of the Department of Health, Dr Brendan Murphy, dated 6 November 2020.

What are the requirements of the IPC lead?

As detailed in Dr Murphy's letter of 6 November 2020, the requirements of the IPC lead are as follows:

- By **1 December 2020**, each aged care facility (each service location) is required to appoint at least one designated member of the nursing staff as an IPC lead

- By **31 December 2020**, the IPC lead(s) must have completed identified IPC lead training
- In addition, by **31 December 2020**, the IPC lead(s) must have enrolled in or commenced suitable IPC training if they do not already hold suitable existing qualifications
- The IPC lead(s) must be employed by and report to the approved provider
- The IPC lead(s) must be engaged onsite and be dedicated to a facility
- The IPC lead(s) may have a broader role within the facility, and could be an existing member of staff

The IPC lead(s) role within the service is to observe, assess and report on infection prevention and control, and to assist with developing procedures and providing best practice advice. This is to ensure that each service has up-to-date processes and procedures in place regarding infection prevention and control, and outbreak management, which are reflective of best practice.

Where can I find out more about the requirements and timing of implementation of the IPC lead(s)?

The IPC lead requirements, including working and training arrangements and critical dates, and a copy of Dr Murphy's letter to all approved providers, are all available on the [Department of Health](#) website.

Which approved providers need to appoint an IPC lead?

All Australian Government funded residential aged care facilities must have an IPC lead, including providers of:

- the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) Program
- the Multi-Purpose Services (MPS) Program.

At this stage, home care service providers are not required to appoint an IPC lead, however, are encouraged to review the IPC information and complete the IPC training requirements to support the health and well-being of staff and aged care consumers under their care.

We already have an infection control program. Why do we need to appoint an IPC lead?

Implementation of IPC leads is designed to increase infection prevention and control expertise across the aged care sector. Each residential aged care facility will have at least one dedicated expert who will maintain responsibility for designing, implementing and monitoring infection prevention and control practices to support safe and quality aged care service provision. In addition, all staff must have completed IPC training and be competent in IPC practices.

The Commission expects that, in accordance with the Aged Care Quality Standards, each residential aged care provider will develop and implement an effective infection prevention and control program that is in line with national guidelines, including recommendations, advice or guidelines from the Infection Control Expert Group which advises both Communicable Disease Network Australia (CDNA), and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC). Other guidance issued by the Commission, state and territory governments and the Department of Health should also be referenced, noting that guidance is being updated frequently.

Why is the Commission updating the Aged Care Quality Standards Guidance and Resources?

The Commission has updated the *Aged Care Quality Standards Guidance and Resources for Providers* to reflect the IPC lead requirements, including those for specific infection control training, for residential aged care providers.

These updates correspond with information contained in the letter sent on 6 November 2020 to all residential aged care providers by Dr Brendan Murphy, Secretary of the Department of Health, in which the requirements of appointment, reporting and training of Infection Control and Prevention leads were specified.

What updates has the Commission made to the Quality Standards Guidance and Resources for Providers in relation to the IPC lead requirements?

Updates have been made to the **guidance** and **reflective questions** for the following Quality Standards:

- Standard 3, specifically Requirement (3)(g) regarding minimisation of infection control risks
- Standard 7, specifically Requirement (3)(c) regarding the workforce competency and holding relevant qualifications and knowledge
- Standard 8, specifically Requirement (3)(c) regarding effective workforce governance systems.

Providers must comply with the Quality Standards and that includes taking account of other recognised guidance that might be specific to the services they deliver.

Updates to the **resources** include links to:

- [Infection Control Expert Group endorsed infection control guidance](#)
- [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee](#)
- [COVID-19 and the Commonwealth Home Support Programme – information for clients, families and carers, Department of Health](#)
- [Coronavirus COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control for Residential Care Facilities](#)
- [COVID-19 Escalation Tiers and Aged Care Provider Responses](#)
- [Outbreak management planning in aged care, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#)

Providers are encouraged to review the updates in the Commission Guidance and Resources to familiarise themselves with these changes.

What is the relationship of the IPC lead to approved provider obligations under the Aged Care Act?

Aged care providers have an obligation to provide safe, effective and quality delivery of personal and clinical care in accordance with the requirements of the *Aged Care Act 1997* and the *Quality of Care Principles 2014*.

The IPC lead requirements complement the existing regulatory framework by providing clarity about responsibilities and practices that will promote safe and quality aged care for consumers.

How will the Commission consider the IPC lead requirements as part of regulatory activities?

Residential aged care providers will be required to demonstrate, during relevant performance assessments under the Aged Care Quality Standards, how they are meeting their responsibilities regarding infection prevention and control.

The Commission will have regard to (amongst a range of forms of evidence) how a provider is implementing the IPC lead requirements, including the qualifications and expertise of the IPC lead, and provision and recording of ongoing training regarding infection prevention and control. The Commission expects to be able to engage with IPC lead staff on matters related to infection prevention and control within the service, including reference to escalation tiers and provider actions by escalation tier.

The Commission's Assessment Methodology and supporting documents for quality assessors have also been updated to reflect these changes.

Outbreak management planning?

The Commission has published a new resource, [Outbreak Management Planning in Aged Care](#), which provides practical guidance to support residential aged care providers to minimise the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak, and respond quickly and decisively if an outbreak occurs at their service. This resource document includes examples and links to key documents and guidance to support thorough preparation, which should be tailored to each individual service.

The outbreak management planning guidance should be used, along with other guidance already referenced in this fact sheet, as part of infection planning and control systems. While the guidance is aimed at residential aged care services, other providers are encouraged to review the document to support planning and preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks, in response to a situation of escalating or de-escalating COVID-19 outbreaks.

The [Outbreak management planning resource](#) is available on the Commission website.

Where can I find out more?

Any questions regarding the IPC lead requirements, including those regarding training and reporting, should be directed to the Department of Health at agedcareIPC@health.gov.au

You can find more information on the IPC lead requirements at:

- [Department of Health Infection and Prevention Control Leads](#)
- [Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Media Announcement by Senator Colbeck from 31 August 2020](#)
- [Quality Standards Guidance and Resources](#)