

Useful Resources for Residents and Families in a COVID-19 Outbreak

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health to provide information and individual advocacy support to older people receiving Commonwealth funded aged care services and their families.

OPAN delivers its services through a network of state and territory-based service delivery organisations (SDO). In Queensland Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADAA) is the service delivery organisation who delivers individual services to older people, their families, and their representatives.

A range of collateral has been developed to help aged care residents and families to be kept informed and have a voice in an active outbreak or lockdown. These resources have been developed at the request of providers during COVID-19 outbreaks to date and have proved useful in informing and supporting older people and their families. OPAN recognises that providers have much to do quickly and these resources are offered to help support their efforts.

Resources available include:

- ★ An initial OPAN and Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADAA) co-branded letter outlining advocacy support.
- ★ To accompany the letter, an information sheet called “Know Your Rights”.
- ★ A “Know Your Rights” poster for placement around the facility.
- ★ A plain English flyer (A5) and poster (A3) explaining facility lockdown to residents.
- ★ Suggested text for a thank you note from the Provider to residents in lockdown.
- ★ Script for a video for a Provider to have recorded for residents, explaining the restrictions.
- ★ A video with Dr Norman Swan, using the above script, explaining facility lockdown to residents (available in English, Greek, Italian, Chinese Simplified and Vietnamese). vimeo.com/showcase/7344129
- ★ Dr Norman Swan video introducing advocacy. vimeo.com/428398066
- ★ Dr Norman Swan video introducing the Older Person's COVID-19 Support Phone Line. (available in English, Greek, Italian, Chinese Simplified and Vietnamese). opan.com.au/opcsl
- ★ Information on the Older Person's COVID-19 Support Line in 64 languages. opan.com.au/opcsl

Please contact OPAN or Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADAA) if you would like more information about this document or the resources available.



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Supporting Residents and Families in a COVID-19 Outbreak

The following information represents strategies learnt from recent COVID-19 outbreaks in aged care across Australia. The strategies have proved effective in improving communication with residents and families. OPAN and Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADAA) recommends RACF Providers consider implementing the following measures inside their facility to support residents and families during an outbreak.

Communication:

- ★ A dedicated, on-the-ground Comms Team to deal with all of the family enquiries/issues that arise. Families should be asked how frequently they would like to be updated (e.g. daily; every second day; etc; or when health status changes).
- ★ Consider engaging a Crisis Comms Advisor.
- ★ Daily email updates to all families detailing changes to processes regarding food, laundry, infection controls, staffing levels (even if there is nothing to report, it is important to communicate this).
- ★ If there are a significant number of residents and families requiring advocacy, group Family Zoom Meetings are a safe space for families to raise issues and gain information.
- ★ Consider sending a condolence message to families when a resident passes from COVID-19.
- ★ Create and communicate a process for returning the belongings of residents who have passed, and adhere to that process.

Visitation and Contact:

- ★ Scheduled window visits for family members .
- ★ Issue all residents with a smart phone or tablet for regular external communication .

Other:

- ★ Develop a Laundry Management Plan. This can easily go awry once infection control/quarantine measures come into play, and can cause great anxiety to residents and their families.
- ★ Appoint a “go-to” person inside the facility to whom advocates can escalate issues for resolution. It is important that advocates don’t have to wait in the same ‘queue’ as families, noting that whilst independent advocacy at the resident/family level is essential, it is also critical to ensure that advocates have the ability to escalate systemic issues to the provider’s management so that they can be addressed.

We hope that this document provides insight into ways that residents and families can be supported in these difficult times. Please contact OPAN or Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADAA) if you would like more information about this document or the resources available.



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