

Wyndham Community and Education Centre Inc Policy & Procedure

Policy Name	Epidemic and Pandemic Policy & Procedure
Responsible Person	CEO, Epidemic/Pandemic Team (CEO, CFO, Senior First Aid Officer)
Staff Involved	All staff
Review Dates	2024

Policy context

From time to time infectious diseases develop into epidemics or pandemics and create increased risks for staff and the community. These occasions require specific policies and actions targeted at the particular disease in question, and general efforts at preparedness and risk mitigation.

Wyndham Community and Education Centre (Wyndham CEC) aims as far as possible to protect its staff, its clients and students, its volunteers, and the general public from infection or contagion by epidemic and/or pandemic.

Wyndham CEC takes its duty of care in a pandemic seriously. Staff have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.

Through its policies and procedures, Wyndham CEC will facilitate, strategies designed to reduce risks to its staff, its clients and students, its volunteers, and the general public.

Wyndham CEC will comply with any directions from authorised public health officers and recognised medical authorities and/or Government Health Orders in relation to a declared epidemic or pandemic.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the strategies and actions that Wyndham CEC intends to take to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases that are declared epidemics or pandemics, and control the transmission of infectious diseases when a case/s is identified.

For the purpose of this policy, **infectious diseases** mean diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another and is highly contagious. This policy is focused on infectious diseases that are publicly declared to be an epidemic or pandemic by Australian Federal or State government authorities and/or other relevant authority such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) e.g. COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) declared in 2020.

This Policy will be updated as required to reflect changes to COVID-19 public health responses and advice, or any other declared pandemic/epidemic.

Policy

Wyndham CEC will, as far as possible, plan for and make advance preparations for the possibility that its operations will be affected by an epidemic or pandemic. This means taking all necessary precautions to meet legal requirements and appropriate decisions for the safe management of the organisation.

This document was created and accepted by the Board of Governance of the Wyndham Community and Education Centre Inc on 8/12/2023 and supersedes all previous versions.

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Since the COVID pandemic (2020) ongoing COVID cases continue to be prevalent in communities. Any staff member who has COVID must notify their supervisor immediately. It will be necessary for the staff member to isolate at home if positive for 5 days. The employer must be notified if they were onsite in preceding 48 hours.

In the event of an epidemic or pandemic, Wyndham CEC will, as far as possible:

- Assist staff, clients and students, volunteers and others, as relevant, to minimise their exposure to the pandemic by monitoring the organisation's work and community spaces.
- Undertake a Risk Assessment of each Wyndham CEC venue;
- Develop and monitor the organisational Risk Plan (Pandemic section);
- As required, provide standard personal protective equipment;
- Maintain services and operations throughout the period of concern if safe to do so;
- Closely monitor and follow advice from Australian national and state authorities;
- Close or pause programs and services as required; and/or,
- Transition staff to working from home or remotely where possible and/or as directed.

Preventative measures

In the event of an infectious disease being declared an epidemic or pandemic, or possible or likely epidemic or pandemic, Wyndham CEC requires all staff, volunteers, students and clients to take the following precautions during the period of an active pandemic:

- Stay at home if unwell; do not come to work, to class or to an appointment;
- Maintain recommended 1.5M distance between yourself and anyone else wherever and whenever possible. Consider wearing a mask if you can;
- Follow good health hygiene guidelines, and encourage others to do the same ; including covering your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, and disposing of used tissue immediately;
- Regularly and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water and sanitise;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth; and,
- Seek medical advice immediately and follow the directions of your local health authority if you come into contact with a confirmed case, e.g. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Victoria directions for details about requirements to isolate <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/>

Isolation Requirements

1. An employee who tests positive for COVID-19 must:
 - Notify Wyndham CEC of your positive diagnosis;
 - Not attend onsite for any reason until the conclusion of your required 5-day isolation period –and follow all isolation requirements.
2. If you are a close contact:
 - Work from home if you can
 - Use a rapid antigen (RA) test for 5 days

Leave and Flexibility

Workers can make use of leave consistent with Wyndham CEC leave policy, relevant industrial instruments and the National Employment Standards (including access to unpaid leave) if you are too unwell to work.

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Wyndham CEC recognises that staff may request or require paid and unpaid leave when they are unwell, at risk of, or vulnerable to infection, and at risk of infecting others. Staff may also require leave to look after children who are sick or who have been isolated from school or childcare.

Wyndham CEC will at its discretion require staff who are close contacts/other contacts, to work from home if they can, and/or RAT test for 5 days before returning.

In the event of a positive diagnosis, staff must exclude themselves from the workplace including during the period they are awaiting test results (see above isolation requirements section). Staff should contact a senior manager immediately by phone to discuss.

Employment Conditions during Natural Disasters and Emergencies

In the event that an epidemic or pandemic is declared by the national or state authority in Australia as an emergency, Fair Work Australia guidelines regarding stand down could apply.

Wyndham CEC will assess the following options before standing staff down:

- Inviting employees to take accrued paid leave such as annual leave;
- Requiring employees to take leave if their award allows it;
- Flexible arrangements across work sites where possible and safe to do so; and,
- Consider staff working from home.

Any arrangements to alter working conditions will be made in accordance with the Fair Work Act and relevant Industrial Awards.

Responsibilities

The **CEO** is responsible for:

- Nominating the Epidemic/Pandemic Crisis Team (CEO, CFO and Senior First Aid Officer). The CEO will override or alter this composition as she sees fit, and as the situation warrants;
- Ensuring that the organisation's Staff Leave and OH&S policies are consistent with the intention of this Epidemic or Pandemic Policy & Procedure;
- Assessing the organisation's vulnerabilities, in the light of the epidemic or pandemic, to:
 - o Wyndham CEC's own human resources;
 - o Wyndham CEC's suppliers of services;
 - o In the event of an epidemic or pandemic;
 - o Giving notice to staff, volunteers, clients, and any persons likely to be affected that epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect;
 - o Bringing into operation the epidemic or pandemic management procedures specified below; and
 - o Instituting any administrative measures necessary to reduce the impact of the vulnerabilities detailed above.

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are aware of any epidemic/pandemic policies and procedures and related policies in effect at any time.

Employees/volunteers are responsible for:

- Abiding by any epidemic/pandemic policies and procedures specified, when informed by authorised staff that epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect.

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Clients/students are responsible for:

- Abiding by any epidemic/pandemic policies and procedures, when informed by authorised staff that epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect.

The Epidemic/ Pandemic Team is responsible for:

- Working with the CEO on the preparation of comprehensive epidemic/pandemic risk assessments, COVIDSafe Planning, vaccination requirements and return to the workplace planning and guidelines;
- Working with the the CEO on when epidemic/pandemic procedures should be activated;
- Working with all sectors of the organisation to identify mission-critical staff and functions;
- Provision of hygiene products/PPE;
- Implementing working from home arrangements; and,
- Staff training.

Procedures

The following procedures apply in the event of the CEO giving notice that epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect.

Events

- The CEO, with the advice of the Epidemic/ Pandemic Team, will consider (on an ongoing basis), whether any events involving the attendance of staff or members of the public should be changed, rescheduled, paused or cancelled to minimise the risk of infection

Work procedures

- The CEO, with the advice of the Epidemic/ Pandemic Team, will consider (on an ongoing basis), whether:
 - o it is necessary or appropriate for any/or all staff/volunteers to work from home; and,
 - o staff/volunteer travel, for work should be modified or terminated
- The CEO, with the advice of the Epidemic/ Pandemic Team, may require any member of staff to not attend the workplace, and/or to work from home, or, if this is not feasible or appropriate, to take leave, particularly in the consider on a case by case basis; and,
- The CEO, with the advice of the Epidemic/ Pandemic Team, may require any member of staff to provide satisfactory evidence that they are well to return to work if they have been a confirmed positive case or in contact with a confirmed positive case (see above isolation requirements section).

Contractors and suppliers

- The CEO, with the advice of the Epidemic/ Pandemic Team, will consider on a continuing basis, whether arrangements with existing suppliers need to be modified or supplemented to ensure uninterrupted service delivery. This includes contractors or suppliers following epidemic/pandemic procedures and guidelines that are in place

Health Messaging

- The Epidemic/ Pandemic Team will familiarise staff/volunteers and others, as relevant, with recommended procedures on health guidelines (e.g. handwashing, sanitising , sneezing, coughing) as appropriate; and,
- Wyndham CEC will develop COVID Safe plans to ensure ongoing informed health messaging.

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Responding to an incident

Wyndham CEC will work with health authorities as required at the time of any outbreak/cases.

Responses could include:

- Closure of an affected venue;
- Reporting to State health authority if required;
- Notifying community/those potentially impacted following advice of a COVID case; and,
- Notifying Worksafe Victoria as required.

Returning to the workplace

In the event that staff have transitioned to working from home during a pandemic, staff will be required to follow a COVIDSafe Plan, and/or isolation requirements from time to time, on return to the workplace.

Returning to the workplace safely will or may require a combination of the following:

- Evidence of full vaccination as per policy;
- Staged returns;
- Physical distancing;
- Good health hygiene practices including hand sanitising;
- Worker behaviour change;
- Remodelling of the workplace (if required);
- Masks as per government guidelines at the time or, recommended if physical distancing is not possible; and
- Evidence of a negative result 5 days after a positive diagnosis however, if staff are still testing positive but not displaying symptoms, and have completed their 5-day isolation period, they may return to work if they can't work from home.

Related Documents

Legislation: Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth), Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth), Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 (Vic), Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, Privacy & Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic), Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic), Health Records Act 2002 (Vic).

Policies: OHS Policy & Procedure, Critical Incident & Emergency Management Policy & Procedure, Privacy Policy & Procedure (students/clients & staff/volunteers), Staff Recruitment Policy & Procedure, Risk Identification & Management Policy & Procedure, Working from Home Policy & Procedure, Staff Leave Policy & Procedure, Health Policy & Procedure, COVID-19 Vaccination Policy & Procedure (Staff and Volunteers), COVID-19 Vaccination Policy & Procedure (Students, Clients and Visitors), Record Management and Record Keeping Policy & Procedure, Rapid Antigen Testing Policy & Procedure.

Other: Fair Work Act Regulations 2009, Industrial Awards, Health Directions, Public Health Orders, Wyndham CEC Risk Venue Assessments, COVID Safe Plans, Contact Assessment and Management Guidance: workplaces, business and industry. (30/12/21 Vic Govt).