

Mid/Far North Office (Payroll)

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22nd February 2022

Client update

Update on the Omicron COVID-19 situation:

We have attached a Government letter that we are sending to all Clients, giving information about the possibility of not having enough Support Workers to cover some allocated hours or shifts.

The Government advises us to anticipate impacts to our workforce over the next three months due to isolating requirements related to COVID-19, and that we will need to prioritise services to keep those Clients with the highest need safe.

Currently the period of self-isolation for people who test positive for COVID-19 (including household members) is 10 days. Day eight test for household members. Self-isolation for close contacts is seven days.

We have also tucked into this envelope a couple of COVID-19 flyers that provide you with more information to help you prepare for the possibility of you, or someone in your household, getting COVID-19.

Close contact Support Workers – may be asked to continue to work:

Asymptomatic close contacts of a COVID-19 case will be able to continue to work if they return a negative rapid antigen test (RAT) at the beginning of each day of their isolation period. They will only be allowed to go to work, not anywhere else. The use of full PPE kit will be required during this time. Their household will still need to continue to isolate.

We have a supply of RATs that can be used to ensure essential cares continue. Currently the rules do not allow for them to be used for surveillance, so they can only be used in the above situation – where a close contact Support Worker needs to continue working to provide essential cares. We've had four Support Workers use them so far and they managed it easily.

In each situation where we ask close contact Support Workers to continue working, we will assess the PPE requirement.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

As noted above, we now have a supply of RATs. We anticipate receiving a further supply of N95 masks, goggles, face shields and disinfection wipes. Currently these have only been used in the case where both the close contact high-needs Clients (**isolating**) and the close contact Support Workers (isolating) continued with care. N95 masks need to be fit-tested – we are still working through how this will be managed.

It is vital that all Support Workers continue with current PPE best practice of wearing a fresh supplied medical mask at each visit, sanitising and distancing where possible. In determining close contact we have found that the Covid Advice Line asks questions around the size of the room, ventilation, and length of time within close distance to the Client.

We want to be able to say that our Support Workers wore their masks at all times and kept their distance (1.5metres or more) in situations where it was possible.

Support Workers that come to you should be checking each time, before entering your home, that you and your household members are well and you don't have anyone visiting (or visited) that may have been in contact with COVID-19.

When to Contact us:

Please let us know asap if:

- You are unwell,
- You have had a test for COVID-19,
- You have come into close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19,
- You have been notified and advised to isolate and get a Covid test

Call the office on 0800 832 383 and Dial 1 or email officewhg@homesupport.co.nz

We anticipate most close-contact or COVID positive Clients will be able to isolate independently without Support Workers. If you need your Support Worker continuing to provide your essential cares, we'll need to manage the process of RATs and PPE.

Service changes:

The office may suffer some disruption if office staff become unwell or are required to isolate at home. We assure you we will do our best to make sure there will always be someone available. However you may need to leave a message and someone WILL get back to you as soon as they can. Alternatively you can send an email to: officewhg@homesupport.co.nz. We appreciate your patience as we work through any disruption.

With Kind Regards

The Management Team
Home Support North Charitable Trust