

Protecting children during COVID-19

Tips for social workers and social welfare practitioners

#8 – Care Centres: Keeping children and staff safe during the COVID-19 Crisis

Keeping children in residential care and the staff caring for them safe and healthy during the COVID-19 crisis is a particular challenge. However, there are things you can do to prevent transmission, treat the sick and ensure the children in the centre stay well and healthy.

To prevent the spread of coronavirus disease, treat someone who is sick and ensure that children who are in the care centre stay safe and healthy

- Limit outside interactions
- Practice social distancing within the residential care centre
- Practice infection control
- Listen to, reassure and encourage children and staff
- Identify symptoms early and ensure care for the ill

Next: how to achieve each of the above actions



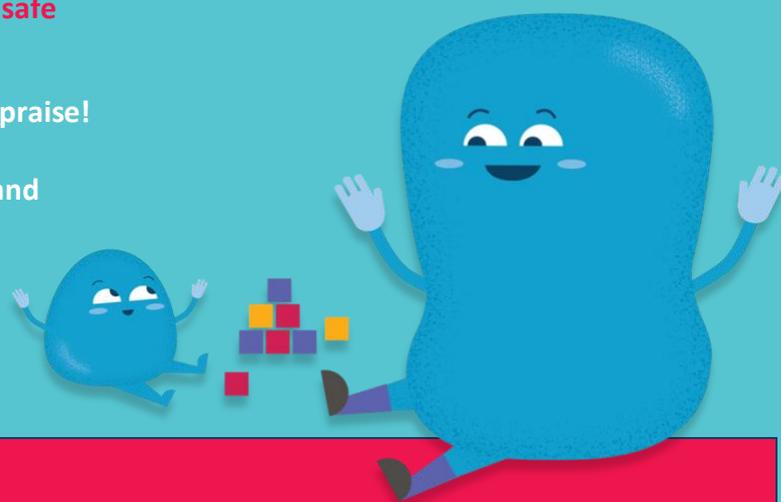
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Thank you for continuing to support children and families in need, even in these difficult times. You are heroes.



Limit outside interactions

Limit those leaving and returning to the residential care centre to as few and as infrequent as possible. The fewer people from outside the care centre that staff and children engage with, the less chance there is they will be exposed to people who may have the virus.

- Only essential staff, i.e., those responsible for the physical, emotional and safety needs of children in care, should report to work.
- Encourage essential staff to reside in the care centre to minimize exposure to the virus.
- Discontinue visits and any events involving persons coming from outside the institution to join an activity within the care centre.
- Do not take children out of the care centre: children should not attend school, religious service, go to the market or sporting events.
- Receive all deliveries to the care centre at the gate and maintain a social distance of at least 1.5 meters with the delivery person.

Practice social distancing within the residential care centre

Practice physical distancing within the residential care centre in the dining rooms, dormitories, and other common spaces by:

- spacing out beds 1.5 meters, dormitories may need to be rearranged to ensure social distancing. Each child and staff member should have their own bed, bedding may not be shared. Dormitories should be well ventilated.
- serving meals in shifts, eating outside or using other spaces to facilitate social distancing; food may not be shared.



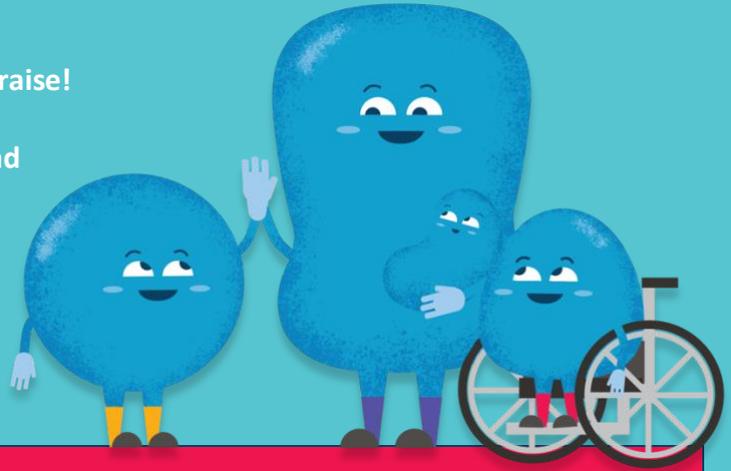
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Practice infection control

Any staff re-entering the residential care centre after having been outside should follow infection control procedures before entering, especially handwashing.

Clean all surfaces and commonly touched areas (doorknobs, kitchen appliances, etc.) on a regular basis with bleach mixed with water (1 capful bleach in five cups of clean water).

Disinfect all items brought into the care centre immediately before use.

Insist on personal hygiene and provide appropriate supplies for all children and staff:

- Wash hands with soap frequently and for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based sanitizers.
- Stick signs up next to all basins, behind toilet doors and in other highly visible locations reminding children and staff of rigorous hand washing method.
- Let children teach each other how to wash their hands.
- Encourage the use of face masks by everyone, including children and staff, and remind everyone to avoid touching their face.
- Sneeze into the flexed elbow, dispose of any tissue appropriately and wash hands with soap and running water immediately afterwards.
- Avoid physical contact with everyone, such as handshaking, hugging and kissing.



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Listen to, reassure and encourage children and staff

Be supportive and actively listen to all children under your care during this time of uncertainty. If a child exhibits signs of worry or stress, take time to listen to them. Explore their concern and reassure and comfort them and explain, in a child friendly manner, about what is happening.

Encourage children's wellbeing, including by maintaining regular routines and exercise.

Encourage children to keep contact with their family through phone calls and texts as this will help calm their worries and fears.

In case staff or a child could benefit from some professional advice about a psychosocial issue, call the Hotline:

- WAO Hotline: 03 7956 3488
- TINA WhatsApp: 018 988 8058
- Talian Kasih: 15999 or WhatsApp 019 261 5999
- Befrienders KL: 03 7956 8144 or 03 7956 8145

Identify symptoms early and ensure care for the ill

Use an infrared thermometer to conduct daily checks of everyone in the residential care centre (staff and children) to detect any fever early, as this is a key symptom of coronavirus disease.

Prepare an isolation room for children and staff who may exhibit symptoms of the coronavirus disease. It is important to isolate any person with symptoms quickly, and then immediately notify a health facility for guidance.

