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## COVID-19 response update

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Agencies are encouraged to regularly check [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au) for accurate and up-to-date health information and instructions.

### Working With Children Check arrangements

The NSW Government has progressed legislation to help respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation allows the Children's Guardian to extend WWCC clearances, where appropriate, to help organisations continue to deliver critical services to children and young people.

All WWCC clearances that are due to expire between 26 March 2020 – 26 September 2020 have been extended by a further six months. The six-month extension applies from the date of the current expiry.

Those people who are affected by this change will receive an email advising them of their new expiry date. Please remind employees, carers and volunteers to ensure their contact details are up to date in the WWCC system. They can do this by using the online [change of details form](#).

Extended Checks will still be continuously monitored, and employers will be alerted where an individual receives a bar or an interim bar, preventing them from working with children and young people.

Someone applying for a WWCC for the first time will still need to apply through the normal processes which include attending a Service NSW Centre to verify their identity.

## Frequently asked questions

The current health recommendations and government directives in relation to COVID-19 require agencies to find new ways of working with children and young people and their carers.

Below are some frequently asked questions that agencies should consider in responding to this health emergency.

See also fact sheet [COVID-19 Home visits, carer assessment and authorisations, carer reviews, home safety inspections and face-to-face family time](#)

Can training and support be provided to carers via online learning, skype or telephone?

Carer training does not necessarily need to be face-to-face and agencies may use a range of strategies to deliver training to carers.

While online training may not meet the needs of all carers, telephone support or informal online support groups may be helpful in reducing carers' sense of isolation and provide opportunities for carers to provide support and share strategies for responding to the challenges presented by the health emergency.

Agencies may deliver pre-authorisation training online, via skype or telephone however, once the immediate health crisis has resolved, agencies should consider any areas of pre-authorisation training that should be further addressed via face-to-face training.

Agencies should document what training is provided to carers and the mode of delivery.

Do carer authorisation assessments or annual reviews need to be conducted face-to-face?

To comply with government directives and health advice, it may not be possible for agencies to undertake face-to-face interviews or assessments with carers.

Agencies may undertake authorisation assessments or reviews via

online platforms, skype or telephone. Agencies should maintain written records of assessments and reviews, including details regarding how the assessment or review was conducted.

Agencies should regularly check [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au) and [NSW Health: COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#) for accurate and up-to-date health information and instructions regarding decisions to undertake interviews or assessments with carers. Once the health crisis has resolved, agencies should consider any issues arising during assessments or reviews that should be further addressed via face-to-face discussions with carers.

### **Home safety checks**

Agencies should regularly check [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au) and [NSW Health: COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#) for accurate and up-to-date health information and instructions regarding decisions about how home safety checks will be completed. As an interim arrangement, home safety checks may be conducted remotely (for example via video conferencing, skype or facetime). While it may not be possible to undertake a thorough check of the home environment in remote mode, agencies should, at a minimum, consider the following issues:

- whether the child or young person has their own bed or cot and whether there is adequate space in the care environment to provide the child or young person with privacy
- whether there is adequate space in the care environment for safe storage of the child or young person's belongings
- whether there is adequate space for the child or young person to

play or study

- whether dangerous chemicals and medications are kept in a safe and secure manner
- whether there are functioning smoke alarms
- where there is a pool, ensuring that it is fenced
- where there are firearms on the property, ensuring that appropriate licenses are in place and they are stored in an appropriate manner

See also the COVID-19 Home safety checklist for the provisional authorisation of carers available on the [factsheets](#) page.

Any home safety checks that are conducted remotely, should be completed again, in person, once the health emergency has resolved. Agencies should clearly document all home safety assessments, including details regarding how the home safety check was undertaken.

**Can children and young people be placed in short-term accommodation with their carer?**

Yes.

The requirements regarding self-isolation where a member of a household becomes unwell may mean that children and young people and/or their carer/s need to temporarily relocate to short-term accommodation (such as Airbnb). In these instances, agencies should conduct a home safety check and ensure that children and young people are not placed in temporary accommodation where other, unknown adults may also be residing on the property.

This also applies where an agency staff member who is known to a child or young person is provisionally authorised to provide foster care and where there is a need for the child or young person and the provisionally authorised carer to reside in short-term accommodation.

## Emergency contacts for children and young people

In circumstances where agencies are relying on telephone or online support for children and young people and their carers, it is vital that children and young people have contact details for the agency, in the case of emergency.

Agencies should ensure that children and young people (where age-appropriate) understand how to contact the agency in an emergency or if they have any concerns about their safety, welfare or wellbeing.

Agencies should also ensure that children and young people know how to contact the Department of Communities and Justice Child Protection Helpline (13 2111), the Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) and emergency services.

**Note:** This advice is current at 14 May 2020 and may be updated over time.