

# Unaccompanied child due to parent/guardian COVID-19 hospital presentation



Western Health

COVID - 19

Be Safe -- Be Smart -- Be Kind

This document provides guidance to Western Health staff regarding the process and steps to manage and support unaccompanied children who may be impacted by a parent/guardian presenting to a Western Health Emergency Department and/or for hospital admission due to suspected or diagnosed COVID-19. The parent/guardian may have been admitted to a streaming hospital from a Western Health Community Pathway or Hospital in the Home Program.

This document can be read in conjunction with the quick reference guide 'Support For Children and Young People impacted by COVID—19 diagnosis' located on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#), which provides further principles regarding Child Safeguarding when impacted by COVID-19

## Applicability

This guidance applies to scenarios whereby a child/children may present to a Western Health Emergency site due to their parent/guardian needing hospitalisation with suspected or diagnosed COVID-19. The child is classified as an unaccompanied child, when it is determined that there is no identified alternate caregiver to look after the child, due to the parent/guardians hospitalisation. A child is deemed as a person under the age of 17 years of age.

## Family Finding Service

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing has commissioned the 'Family Finding' service which operates 7 days per week from 9am - 9pm and is a service provided by Uniting Care that supports COVID-19 positive parents in planning alternative care arrangements for their children with identified family or friends (who are vaccinated) in the event they require hospitalisation due to COVID-19. The service will engage with parents, potential carers and the COVID-19 Positive Pathways team to develop a safe and appropriate care plan. In the event that the parent(s) needs to activate the care plan, Family Finding will support the nominated carer to maintain arrangements until the children can return to their parents' care. 'Family Finding' will receive referrals from COVID Positive Pathway Providers and self-referrals from families that require assistance to develop a care plan. Should the 'Family Finding' service in conjunction with the parent/guardian, be unable to identify alternative care options or arrangements, a referral will be made to the Northern – La Trobe Children in care service.

Referrals to the 'Family Finding' service made via email to [carecoordination@vt.uniting.org](mailto:carecoordination@vt.uniting.org) with the subject line 'Family Finding'.

Referrals for Aboriginal families can be sent to the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) by completing the referral form and emailing to [covidcare@vacca.org](mailto:covidcare@vacca.org) or telephone for urgent referrals 0488 930 509.

Further details and Information regarding the 'Family Finding' service can be located in the 'Family Finding Factsheet' and the 'VACCA Covid Finding Family Referral Form' on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#).

### Initial actions to take when an unaccompanied child is identified

Should it be determined that the parent/guardian will be admitted to hospital due to COVID-19 and/or medically unwell, therefore unable to care for their child/children, the following initial steps should be taken:

- The treating Western Health staff member should discuss with the parent/guardian whether they can identify any suitable family members or caregivers available, who can be contacted to provide care to the child/children. If the child/children are on a Western Health Community Pathway this may have been established earlier.
- Establish the child has been assessed as medically stable and not requiring their own treatment/hospitalisation.
- Establish if there are known significant issues or special needs, including age, developmental stage, behaviours and mental health concerns.
- During specified business hours, a referral can be made to Social Work (Monday- Saturday 8am- 4.30pm) or ACE (Monday- Sunday 7.30am- 9pm) to assist in the process of exploring and identifying appropriate alternate caregiver arrangements and conducting relevant psychosocial assessments. After hours, the onsite treating staff member/team should facilitate this process and refer to Social Work or ACE for further follow up during business hours should the child/children remain on site.
- Should the child not require hospitalisation, and the parent/guardian has provided consent for a relevant family member/caregiver to care for the child/children, arrangements can be made for child to leave hospital, noting the child may likely become COVID-19 positive if not already. Referral can be made to community support in this circumstance to Chronic and Complex Care Central Access Unit 8am – 430 pm 7 days 8345 0013 or through Bossnet e-referral.
- Consider referral to 'Family Finding' service to assist with coordination and planning in identifying alternate care arrangements for children.

### Actions to take when there are no identified alternate family members/caregivers who can care for the child/children

In the event the parent/guardian is unable to provide options for caregiver arrangements for their child/children, and should the child/children be COVID-19 positive, the following steps should be taken by Access Manager with support of Director of Allied Health Business Hours (BH), AHA and Director on call After Hours (AH):

- Should there be no-one to care for the child/children and they are COVID-19 positive and not unwell, contact Northern Hospital to discuss admission to Latrobe Private Hospital if appropriate (**see attached Appendix 1**). Discussion with parents to occur regarding admission to La Trobe Private Hospital for their consent where possible, and information brochure titled 'La Trobe Kids in Care' can be provided to parents/carers or family which outlines the service and what is provided. Link to access brochure can be found here: (<https://northern-health-website.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/29153753/Paediatrics-La-Trobe-Kids-in-Care-4.pdf>).

BH 8am – 5pm Nicole Carlon, Divisional Director, Women's and Children's (Acting)  
0400 878 900

AH (5pm –8am) Executive on call, via hospital switch (03) 8405 8000

- Should the child/children be diagnosed with COVID-19, have significant special needs and/or be unwell and therefore requiring hospitalisation, the child/children should be transferred to the Royal Children's Hospital (Emergency consultant in charge 8345 5522) or Monash Medical Centre (Martin Keogh 0413 407 408) as per COVID Hospital Streaming protocol
  - contact the streaming site, provide them with all relevant information, including any relevant clinical or patient information to support care. The admitting officer at the selected site will then contact the Ambulance Emergency Operations Centre (AEOC), 1300 851 121 to arrange transfer. The AEOC will dispatch a dedicated COVID transfer non-emergency crew to complete the COVID-19 positive patient transfer from the referring site to the selected site, as per usual processes.
- If unable to access a Latrobe Private Hospital admission for a well child who is SCOVID or COVID-19 positive :
  - Referral to be made to Social Work during hours below, to conduct a further psychosocial and risk assessment.
  - Social Work will initiate and manage processes with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection. Child Protection will conduct their internal assessment process to determine suitable arrangements for the child/children in conjunction with Social Work services.
  - Transfer to Joan Kirner Women's & Children's paediatric ward can be discussed with the Access Manager in consultation with Divisional Director Women's and Children's BH or AHA and Director on call AH to ensure child/children are not waiting long hours in ED.

### Relevant Services and Contact Details

- **Social Work** is available within the Emergency Department, Monday- Friday 8am- 4.30pm and can be contacted on 0466 372 353.
- **Social Work** is available within Joan Kirner Women's & Children's, Monday- Saturday 8am – 4.30pm and can be contacted on 0466 531 855 or 0466 793 978.
- **ACE** are available within the Emergency Department, 7 days per week 7.30am- 9.00pm and can be contacted on 8345 0189 or 8345 0154 (Sunshine) and 8345 7298 or 8345 6731 (Footscray).
- **Child Protection** For children already known to or clients of child protection email [CPCOVIDresponse@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:CPCOVIDresponse@dffh.vic.gov.au) Urgent queries can occur via Judith Rose, Manager Child Protection and Care Services COVID-19 Response- 0409 739 905
- **Child Protection Intake** (Business Hours) 1300 664 977.
- **Child Protection** (After Hours) 13 12 78.
- **Family Finding Service** [carecoordination@vt.uniting.org](mailto:carecoordination@vt.uniting.org)
- **VACCA Family Finding** [covidcare@vacca.org](mailto:covidcare@vacca.org) 0488 930 509

## Appendix 1 Northern Health COVID Positive Paediatric Transfer Process to LaTrobe Private

### Northern Health (NH) COVID Positive Pediatrics Transfer Process to Latrobe Private with Ambulance Victoria (AV) FLOWCHART

\*\*\*\*if parents are home, but require support, please contact [carecoordination@vt.uniting.org](mailto:carecoordination@vt.uniting.org) or for Aboriginal families, [covidcare@vacca.org](mailto: covidcare@vacca.org)\*\*\*\*

#### INTAKE

- Health service/AV have identified COVID positive child/ren is/are vulnerable due to parent/s/guardian hospitalization
- Child/ren are well (do not need hospitalization or specialist care)
- Health service/AV cannot locate alternative care arrangement
- Health service/AV-
  - If children are **clients of child protection (open case)**, CERCY pathway is to be accessed. Contact [CP.COVIDresponse@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:CP.COVIDresponse@dffh.vic.gov.au) OR for urgent enquires, Judith Rose, Manager Child Protection and Care Services COVID-19 response: 0409 739 905
  - If **no CP involvement OR unknown with a time critical transfer**, proceed with Latrobe Private pathway: contact Latrobe Nurse in Charge 0497915308/94738900
  - If **CP involvement/status unknown and transfer is not time critical**, contact Anglicare Family Finding via [carecoordination@vt.uniting.org](mailto:carecoordination@vt.uniting.org) or for Aboriginal families, [covidcare@vacca.org](mailto:covidcare@vacca.org)
- Determine availability of bed/s and access to Latrobe Private (see ACCESS)
- Nurse I/C at Latrobe Private Arrange Teams meeting: Paeds consultant, AV/health service with child/ren

#### ELIGIBILITY FOR LATROBE ADMISSION

Consultant Paed/Nurse in charge to determine suitability for admission - must be "well"

- If child/ren is/are well - AV to transport to Latrobe Private
- If child/ren is/are unwell - AV to transport to streaming hospital (RCH/Monash)
- If child/ren have underlying illnesses/disabilities, please discuss ability to accommodate as may need to source specialist equipment/staffing

#### ACCESS

Due to shared corridor, access via this route between 3pm-5am ONLY

- Between 7am-3pm, access via Emergency Stairwell
- Consider if child/ren is/are safe to ascend staircase
- If unable to safely use staircase, child/ren may need to be transported to ED and remain there until corridor access available

#### ADMISSION PROCESS

##### IN HOURS 7am – 3pm

Contact Ward 2 Ward Clerk  
8411

##### OUT OF HOURS 3pm – 7am

Contact ED Ward Clerk (03) 8405  
03) 8405 8600

- Admit to N – Latrobe Children in Care
- Notify Hospital Coordinator of all admissions
- Basic admission information needed i.e.
  - Name & DOB
  - Address
  - NOK information
  - past medical history
  - current medications
  - allergies
- Nurse IC or delegate to print labels from iPM once admitted
- Nurse IC or delegate to email Family Finding service to provide client details (or VACCA for Aboriginal families)
- Where able, Paediatric consultant to write admission note on CPF and complete a medication chart - electronic or hard copy then scan/email or fax to the nurse in charge at the COVID kids ward
- When child arrives on the ward:
  - nurse to do a set of vitals, weight and assessment as per CARE record
  - contact Paediatric consultant on call with any concerns