The Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19

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What is the *Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19?*

The *Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19* (the Code) sets out the aged care industry's expectations of conduct for aged care providers on how to support residents being able to have visitors while also keeping them safe and protected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Code complements the existing regulatory framework overseen by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. It does this by further specifying industry-agreed acceptable practice, guarding against misapplication of emergency provisions and promoting industry-led better practice. The Code provides best practice support and leadership from the sector on the important issue of visiting residential aged care services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who developed the Code?

Initiated by COTA and supported by 13 aged care peak bodies and consumer advocacy organisations, the Code has drawn on sector expertise and experience in consultation with consumer groups to clarify industry expectations on visiting residential aged care services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is the relationship of the Code to provider obligations under the Aged Care Act?

Aged care providers have an obligation to provide care and services in accordance with the requirements of the Aged Care Act, including the Aged Care Quality Standards and the Charter of Aged Care Rights. Provider obligations include responsibilities for quality and safety and respecting the rights of consumers, and focus on the outcomes that the community can expect from organisations that provide Commonwealth-subsidised aged care services. The Code is not a legislated obligation but complements the regulatory framework by providing clarity on industry expectations of the practices that will support these outcomes for consumers.

How will the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission consider the Code in its regulatory activities?

The Commission recognises the Code as an important element to assure consumers and their families of the actions that aged care providers will take to ensure that individuals in residential aged care can remain connected with their family and friends during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Code specifies industry-agreed acceptable practice and provides clarity about the application of emergency provisions. Application of the Code by providers can help inform the Commission's understanding of how a provider is meeting its responsibilities to provide safe and effective care and services, to meet the needs and preferences of their residents. Evidence of how a service is applying the Code will be considered, where relevant, by the Commission in monitoring and assessing providers in relation to the Aged Care Quality Standards and the Aged Care Charter of Rights.

How will the Code be relevant in considering complaints to the Commission?

The Code will better equip aged care residents and their families to understand what they can expect from their aged care provider in relation to visitor access, and will support them to approach their provider in the first instance to discuss their particular needs and circumstances. In responding to a complaint about visitor access to an identified residential aged care service, the Commission will have regard to the Charter of Aged Care Rights and the Aged Care Quality Standards, and will also give consideration to the provider's application of the Code.

Where can I find out more?

The Commission will be publishing case studies of how the Commission may utilise the Code and consider relevant evidence from its application by providers when undertaking the Commission's functions.

You can find more information on the Code from the aged care industry peak bodies, including at:

https://lasa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Industry-Code-RAC-Visits-FINAL-11-May-2020-1.15pm.pdf

https://acsa.asn.au/Media/2020/Industry-Code-for-visiting-aged-care-homes-release

https://www.agedcareguild.com.au/media-releases/industry-code-for-visiting-aged-care-homes-released

https://www.cota.org.au/policy/aged-care-reform/agedcarevisitors/

https://opan.com.au/industry-code-finalised/

https://www.dementia.org.au/media-releases/2020/industry-code-for-visiting-aged-care-homes-released

https://nationalseniors.com.au/news/latest/covid-19-new-industry-code-for-visiting-aged-care-facilities