

GUIDANCE for accrediting agencies

Risk screening for COVID-19

While Australia has maintained a low rate of spread of COVID-19 in the community, there is an ongoing risk of outbreaks until there is wide spread uptake of a COVID-19 vaccine.

There is also a risk of transmission and clusters of COVID-19 infections in health service organisations, including residential aged care facilities, community and Aboriginal health services.

Onsite assessment to the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards has recommenced. The decision to proceed with a scheduled assessment requires a risk based approach.

Where there is an escalated risk, the decision to proceed should be jointly determined by accrediting agencies, relevant health departments and the Commission. For more information visit: [Planning for recommencement of Assessments under the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality \(AHSSQA\) Scheme](#).

To mitigate risks associated with assessors undertaking onsite assessments accrediting agencies are required to routinely review the risks. This includes screening of assessors immediately prior to them commencing an onsite assessment.

Health service organisations should ensure that their approach to screening is guided by [current public health guidance](#) and/or any specific advice provided by the health department in their state or territory.

The [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#) (the CDNA SoNG) is the most appropriate source of current advice regarding clinical and epidemiological risk factors for the spread of COVID-19.

This document is frequently updated and should be referred to regularly. Sample screening questions, based on the CDNA SoNG, are included below.

Sample screening questions:

■ **In the last 14 days, have you had any of the following (no matter how mild):**

- Fever
- Night sweats
- Chills
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Diarrhoea
- Loss of smell or taste

■ **In the last 14 days, have you:**

- Travelled internationally or interstate
- Been on a cruise ship
- Been in self-isolation or quarantine for any reason
- Been in a declared COVID-19 hot spot
- Had a COVID-19 test and awaiting results?

■ **Have you ever been told that you:**

- Have COVID-19
- Were a close contact of a person with COVID-19

If you answer **YES** to any of these questions an assessor must notify their accrediting agency immediately. If an assessor currently has any of the symptoms listed above, they must get tested for COVID-19 and follow the advice from your local health department.

Implementation protocol

Accrediting agencies should implement a protocol for screening all assessors, observers or other members of the accrediting agency that are involved in an onsite assessment. The following table provides guidance on who is responsible for taking action and when it should occur.

Risk Screening for COVID -19: Activities and Responsibilities

Who	When	Outcome
Undertake a risk assessment of the geographic location and health service facilities before confirming an assessment will proceed		
<p>Accrediting Agencies, in collaboration with the health service organisation are to undertake a risk assessment and identify any restrictions placed on the facility because of the risk of COVID in the local geographic area.</p>	<p>This should occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to confirming the assessment date(s) • During planning in the 4-6 weeks prior to the assessment • Immediately before (24- 48 hours) the assessment is to be conducted. 	<p>Assessments should be rescheduled for health service organisations in areas where there are active COVID-19 cases, or ongoing management of active COVID-19, as determined by the local jurisdiction Department of Health.</p>
Take assessors' temperature prior to entering the health service facility to reduce the risk of transmission of infection		
<p>Accrediting Agencies are responsible for ensuring any assessor that will be onsite during an assessment has their temperature taken prior to commencing the assessment.</p> <p>Assessors should certify in writing to the accrediting agency that they are asymptomatic and will take their own temperature and only proceed onsite with the assessment if their temperature is below 37.5 degree° C.</p> <p>Accrediting agencies should keep a record of the certification.</p>	<p>An assessor's temperature should be taken on the day before and on the morning of the assessment prior to the assessor going onsite.</p> <p>An assessor may also be required to have their temperature taken when entering the health facility as per local health service organisations COVID_19 protocols. This does not negate the requirement for accrediting agencies to undertake screening prior to the commencement of an assessment.</p>	<p>Assessors with a temperature above 37.5°C should be required to follow their state government guidelines with regards to COVID-19 testing and self-isolation protocols. They should also be suspended from any onsite assessment team until they are confirmed COVID free.</p>
Confirm members of the assessment team have not had recent close contact with a person with a confirmed case of COVID-1		
<p>Accrediting Agencies are to require assessors to confirm they have not had close contact with a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the 14 days immediately prior to the onsite visit.</p>	<p>Assessor are required to provide this information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to confirming their participation on an assessment team • During planning 4-6 weeks prior to the assessment • Immediately before (24- 48 hours) the assessment is conducted. <p>Assessors may be required to certify this in writing to the accrediting agency prior to the assessment commencing.</p>	<p>Assessors that have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 should be required to follow their state government guidelines in regard to COVID-19 testing and self-isolation protocols and be suspended from the onsite assessment team until they receive a negative test result.</p> <p>Assessors may be required to certify in writing when a negative test result is received.</p>

Who	When	Outcome
Confirm members of the assessment team have not had recent been in a COVID-19 hot spot area		
<p>Accrediting Agencies are to require assessors to confirm they have not been in COVID-19 hot spots in the 14 days immediately prior to the site visit.</p>	<p>Assessor are required to provide this information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to confirming their participation on an assessment team • During planning 4-6 weeks prior to the assessment • Immediately before (24- 48 hours) the assessment is conducted. <p>Assessors may be required to certify this in writing to the accrediting agency prior to the assessment commencing.</p>	<p>Assessors that have been in a COVID-19 hot spot location should be required to follow their state government guidelines in regard to COVID-19 testing and self-isolation protocols and be suspended from the assessment team until they receive a negative test result.</p> <p>Assessors may be required to certify in writing when a negative test result is received.</p>
Confirm members of the assessment team are not waiting for COVID-19 test results		
<p>Accrediting Agencies are to require assessors to confirm they are not waiting on a COVID-19 test result.</p>	<p>Assessor are required to provide this information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During planning if it is less than 14 days from the assessment • Immediately before (24- 48 hours) the assessment is conducted. 	<p>Assessors in self-isolation awaiting COVID-19 test results are not to be included on assessment teams and should be suspended from the assessment team until they receive a negative test result.</p> <p>Assessors may be required to certify in writing and/or provide evidence of a negative test result.</p>
Confirm members of the assessment team have completed the infection prevention and control training, including donning and doffing PPE		
<p>Accrediting Agencies are to collect assessor completion certificates for the nominated infection prevention and control modules. Assessor are not to be assigned to an assessment team until they have demonstrated completion of the modules.</p>	<p>Assessors are to provide accrediting agencies with completion certificates prior to their assignment to an assessment team.</p>	<p>Improved infection prevention and control practice of assessors and greater sensitivity to infection breaches during assessment.</p>
Establish if there are border or boundary restricted areas at or in close proximity to the facilities to be assessed		
<p>Accrediting Agencies, in collaboration with the health service organisation should routinely monitor border and boundary closures in close proximity to health service facilities.</p>	<p>This should occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the planning in the weeks prior to the assessment • Immediately before (24- 48 hours) the assessment is conducted. 	<p>Assessment in health service organisations in areas with border or boundary closures should be rescheduled, where an assessment team cannot be allocated from within the local boundary.</p>

Who	When	Outcome
Confirm the status of members of the assessment team, visitor or contractor, prior to entering the health service organisation		
Accrediting agencies are to confirm with health service organisations the changes in the members of the assessment team due to COVID-19.	The health service organisation to receive this information prior to the assessment commencing.	If there is an infection outbreak or changes in the assessment team due to isolation requirements, action is to be taken in accordance with local and state COVID-19 Safe Plans and both health service organisations and assessors are provided with clear information about their role and action to be taken.

Further information

Australian Government Department of Health COVID-19 information and resources: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care COVID-19 information and resources (which includes links to state and territory COVID-19 websites): <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/covid-19>

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm>

Questions?

For more information, please visit: [safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/nsqhs-standards](https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/nsqhs-standards)

You can also email the NSQHS Standards Advice Centre at AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au or call 1800 304 056.