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## Face to Face COVID-19 Prevention

### Background

On 16 March 2020 the Victorian government declared a State of Emergency in Victoria, to help minimise the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The number of confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Australia is growing. The situation is changing rapidly. A coronavirus (COVID-19) infection can cause mild to severe respiratory illness.

Common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are:

- Fever
- Chills or sweats
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Runny nose
- Loss of sense of smell

Employees in the healthcare and social assistance industry, such as Canine Comprehension, have a high risk of being exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19). Our team members are likely to come into close contact with clients in facilities and in people's homes, and because they work in high traffic environments.

Canine Comprehension have a duty to provide and maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees. This includes preventing risks to health, including psychological health, and safety associated with potential exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) as a result of providing health care and social assistance services in the current circumstances.

Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own and others health and safety in the workplace and cooperate with their employers about any action they take to comply with the OHS Act or Regulations

### Identifying risks to health in the healthcare and social assistance industry

Some activities that may pose a risk of exposure to coronavirus can include:

- Providing direct support to clients with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.
- Transmission from employees who may have been exposed to patients with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection to other employees.
- Transiting through areas where people with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection are located.



We have also identified that there are other increased risks as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19), including:

- Occupational violence and aggression (both in the workplace and in public areas where staff may wear uniforms), due to poor front-line management, rapidly changing information, increased workload, implementation of government restrictions and public fears about coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Fatigue, as a result of increased workload, inadequate staffing levels, additional or longer shift lengths and other pressures.
- Stress, as a result of vicarious trauma, increased workload and ongoing heightened levels of concentration.

### How we are controlling risks to health

Where a risk to health, including psychological health, is identified at a workplace, Canine Comprehension is working to (where possible), eliminate the risk. Where it isn't possible to eliminate the risk, it must be controlled, so far as is reasonably practicable.

### Systems of work

- Preventing contact with people with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. **If a client is suspected or confirmed they must either elect to cancel the appointment or move to online.**
- Limiting transmission in home-based care settings by allocating clients to the same tutor for each session.
- Consistently applying physical distancing measures in all workplace settings. This will be made clear through the use of floor markers.
- Explicit advice to staff to ensure they do not attend work when unwell.
- Monitoring the health of staff to aid in early detection of suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) infection to prevent transmission.

### Work environment and facilities

- Providing and encouraging use of hand wash and hand sanitiser with over 60 per cent alcohol to allow tutors and clients to maintain good hygiene practices.
- Avoiding shared use of phones, desks, writing equipment, or other work tools and dog handling equipment.
- Thorough and regular sanitation of workplaces and work items.
- Providing tutors with time to wash up and sanitize prior to the end of their session.

### Communications and employee welfare

- Consulting with Canine Comprehension Admin and other staff as often as necessary to ensure their input to any proposed changes.



- Communicating any altered expectations and working conditions to clients via email to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection to employees.
- Using video conferencing for teaching and meetings when necessary.
- Ensuring tutors take regular rest breaks and have time to seek adequate facilities for rest breaks.
- Providing updated information to all employees, including employees on leave, contractors and casual workers via Workplace and email.
- Ensuring that employees know what to do, or who to notify if they feel unwell or suspect they have been infected, according to the COVID-19 Infection Control Training all staff are expected to complete..
- Ensuring that employees know what to do, or who to notify if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable in the workplace.

**If an employee develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) they should isolate themselves immediately, call the coronavirus information line on 1800 675 398 or their doctor and follow the self-isolation guidance available on the DHHS website (link below).**

### **Notifiable incidents**

Under OHS laws, incidents where an employee tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) does not meet the definition of an incident to be notified to WorkSafe Victoria.

### **Legal duties**

Employers have duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act), which include that they must, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- Provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees and independent contractors.
- Provide adequate facilities for the welfare of employees and independent contractors.
- Provide such information, instruction, training or supervision to employees and independent contractors as is necessary to enable those persons to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risks to health.
- Ensure that persons other than employees of the employer are not exposed to risks to their health or safety arising from the conduct of the undertaking of the employer. Consult with employees and HSRs (if any), on matters related to health or safety that directly affect, or are likely to directly affect them.

**The signatories of this permission form must work towards the management or control of the tutors workplace during sessions and must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace and the means of entering and leaving it are safe and without risks to health.**

COVID-19 Prevention Return to work Appendix to permission form.

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**More information:**

<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/prevention-and-management-exposure-coronavirus-covid-19-healthcare-and-social-assistance-industry#>

<https://www.caninecomprehension.com.au/>

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