Communicating about Infectious Disease in Disability Group Homes:

Best Practice Recommendations

These best-practice statements were informed by interviews with group home residents and staff, group home observations, and existing research and policies. They were revised by our industry advisors and were approved by seven experts (experienced group home managers and support workers) as part of a Delphi study. We welcome further feedback and adaptation.

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| **Access to Information** | **Topics of Information** | **Sources of Information** |
| *These recommendations address the way that information about disease outbreaks is presented to group home residents.* | *These recommendations address the breadth and depth of topics about infectious disease that should be made available to residents. Topics will depend on the specific infectious disease being managed.* | *These recommendations are about the role of group home providers in ensuring that residents can access information about disease outbreaks from a range of sources.* |
| If residents want information about a disease outbreak, this should be provided in a format that meets their individual communication needs, such as plain language, visual aids, sign language, or tactile (touch-based) communication.Group home residents should have access to video, audio, and pictures as part of any information provided about a disease outbreak.Posters and visual displays can be helpful in communicating information about infectious disease. Residents should be involved in deciding if, and how, posters or visuals are displayed in their group home.Modelling or demonstrating health protection behaviours (e.g., hand hygiene, mask wearing, social distancing) is an important way to inform group home residents during disease outbreaks.Group home residents should have the opportunity to design or contribute to information resources about outbreaks, that will be used by them and their staff. | Group home residents should have access to the same topics of information about a disease outbreak as everyone in the general community. Information about each topic may need to be simplified for some residents to support their understanding.Group home residents should be involved in deciding what topics of information they have access to regarding disease outbreaks.Supporters (e.g., family or friends), professionals (e.g., disability or healthcare workers) and government bodies should be involved in deciding what topics of information people with disability have access to regarding disease outbreaks. | Group home services should support residents in accessing information about disease outbreaks from the following sources:* television or radio (mainstream media)
* government or health agencies (e.g., press conferences, Government websites, Government apps)
* disability agencies (e.g., group home meetings, case conferences, emails from service provider)
* familiar health professionals (e.g., GP).

Group home services should also support residents who want to access information on social media (e.g., TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, online discussion groups and forums), or via the Internet (e.g., Google searches, general websites). This may include support to understand the risks or limitations of these information sources. |
| **Understanding Information** | **Residents Sharing Information** | **Consent and Decision-Making** |
| *These recommendations address the role of group home staff in supporting residents to seek and understand information about disease outbreaks.* | *The following statements address the* *roles and capabilities of group home residents in communicating and sharing information about disease outbreaks.* | *These recommendations are about informed decision-making and consent for residents, relating to health information.* |
| When a group home resident is exposed to information about a disease outbreak, group home staff should help the resident to understand the information, for example by using simpler language, sign language, pictures, or gestures.Group home staff should be trained and supported in how to help group home residents understand information about a disease outbreak. | Group home residents should be encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings about a disease outbreak. Monitoring behaviours of concern is an important way to understand how a group home resident may be responding to a disease outbreak. Some residents may want to play an active role in health communication, such as helping their housemates, staff, family, friends, community members, or other people with disability to understand or cope with a disease outbreak. Group home providers should support interested residents to meaningfully participate in these roles.  | Group home residents should be supported to make their own decisions about health risks during disease outbreaks.Group home residents should be supported to make their own decisions about following public health rules.Group home residents should be supported to make their own decisions about following public health guidelines and recommendations (e.g., getting vaccinated, practicing hand hygiene, or avoiding high-risk activities).Group home residents should be supported to make their own decisions about who has access to their health information (e.g., knowing a positive test result or vaccination status) during an outbreak.The personal opinions and beliefs of group home residents about a disease outbreak should be respected. |