

NSW Infection Prevention and Control Response and Escalation Framework

Summary The NSW Infection Prevention and Control Response and Escalation Framework provides guidance for COVID-19 and other acute respiratory infections. The framework is embedded as part of the routine infection prevention and control program, which supports NSW Health to respond to infections or outbreaks of local, state or national significance and pandemics.

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Functional group Clinical/Patient Services - Governance and Service Delivery, Nursing and Midwifery
Corporate Administration - Communications, Governance
Personnel/Workforce - Occupational Health and Safety
Population Health - Communicable Diseases, Infection Control

Applies to Local Health Districts, Specialty Network Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Community Health Centres, NSW Ambulance Service, Public Hospitals

Distributed to Public Health System, NSW Ambulance Service

Audience All Chief Executives;Directors of Clinical Governance Units;Infection Control and Prevention, Clinical;Infectious Diseases;All Staff of NSW Health

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Purpose

The NSW Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Response and Escalation Framework (the framework) provides guidance on managing COVID-19 and other acute respiratory infections (ARIs) across the NSW Health system.

The framework is embedded as part of the routine infection prevention and control program, which supports NSW Health to respond to infections or outbreaks of local, state or national significance and pandemics. The framework outlines a foundational level to ensure the NSW Health system remains prepared for infection risks, with structured IPAC escalation strategies based on local prevalence and risk assessment.

The NSW Health Secretary is responsible for directing the minimum state alert level, and NSW Health organisations must undertake local risk assessments to determine if further IPAC measures are required in their facilities.

This Information Bulletin must be read in conjunction with the [Infection Prevention and Control Manual Acute Respiratory Infections including COVID-19](#).

Key Information

Chapter 3 of the [Infection Prevention and Control Manual Acute Respiratory Infections including COVID-19](#) - NSW IPAC Response and Escalation Framework was developed to provide guidance to NSW Health facilities to manage changing levels of COVID-19 transmission risk. This has transitioned to include other ARIs and potential communicable diseases of state or national significance.

The framework provides a foundational level approach to ensure the application of robust IPAC practices as a minimum, on which escalation strategies are added to enhance patient and health worker safety. The framework also provides guiding principles for transmissible infections with a clear response to changing transmission risk and burden to the health care system.

Clinical recommendations

All state-wide changes to risk level will continue to be informed by closely monitored health system metrics with the state alert level being directed by the NSW Health Secretary.

NSW Health organisations:

- may apply local IPAC enhancements based on internal monitoring and risk assessment (refer to the NSW IPAC Response and Escalation Framework - Principles for IPAC monitoring and management for local implementation of the [Infection Prevention and Control Manual Acute Respiratory Infections including COVID-19](#)).

- may adjust escalation responses within the framework throughout their local facilities and/or local health districts, based on risk assessments, including epidemiology, and via consultation with infection prevention and control, and infectious diseases teams.
- may be requested to report facility risk levels to the Clinical Excellence Commission during peak periods.

Additional supporting policies and guidelines

- Clinical Excellence Commission, 2020, [Infection Prevention and Control Practice Handbook](#). Clinical Excellence Commission, Sydney, Australia
- NSW Health Guideline *Triggers for Escalation Following Detection of Infection Outbreaks or Clusters* ([GL2024_013](#))
- NSW Health Policy Directive *Infection Prevention and Control in Healthcare Settings* ([PD2023_025](#))
- Clinical Excellence Commission – [COVID-19 Incident management](#).