NDS & DHHS Webinar: Safer and Stronger – Update on COVID-19 impacts for the disability sector

Tuesday 4th August 2020, 12:00pm – 1:00pm (AEDST)
Welcome and Introductions

Sarah Fordyce – Victorian State Manager (Acting), NDS
Agenda

• DHHS Update – Stage Three and Four Restrictions
  • James Maclsaac, Executive Director Disability, Disability and Communities Branch, Children, Families, Communities and Disability Division, Department of Health and Human Services

• DHHS Update – Department’s response to service providers: Disability Rapid Response Group
  • Phil O’Meara, Executive Director, Disability and Communities Branch, Children, Families, Communities and Disability Division, Department of Health and Human Services

• Public Health Update – key messages and considerations including use of masks
  • Professor John Catford, Senior Medical Adviser, DHHS

• NDIA Update
  • Chris Faulkner, Director, NDIA
  • Gerrie Mitra, General Manager, Provider and Markets Division, NDIA

• Q&A
  • Facilitated by Sarah Fordyce, NDS
DHHS Update – Stage Three and Four Restrictions

James MacIsaac
Director, Disability, Disability and Communities Branch, Children, Families, Communities and Disability Division, Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Health and Human Services: 
Stage 3 and 4 restrictions

James MacIsaac, Executive Director, Disability
Department of Health and Human Services
4 August 2020
1. Key messages

- Restrictions are changing to slow the spread of coronavirus.
- Today’s webinar has been arranged to provide you with immediate information on the new restrictions that have been announced.
- We won’t have all the answers to your questions today. We will capture all questions and come back to you quickly with responses this week.
- There will be further announcements made over this week that we will provide further advice to you on.
- While some activities are still allowable, it is important we all rethink the need for community activities and leaving home at this time unless absolutely essential.
2. Stay at Home Directions - Stage 4

Stage 4 - Stay at Home Directions for the Melbourne area provides four reasons for leaving home:

- to shop for food and essential goods or services (must be within 5 km of their premises)
- to provide care, for compassionate reasons or to seek medical treatment
- to exercise (must be within 5 km of their premises and for one hour a day)
- for work or study, if you can’t do it from home

Essential Services are permitted to continue

- These are disability supports that are essential to a person’s health, safety, behaviour and wellbeing
- Essential services may be provided in-home, in a facility or in the community (in limited circumstances) and include:
  - Residential services, including STAA
  - In-home support
  - Behaviour support services
  - Community support within one of the four reasons listed above
  - Centre based services - where support is essential to the person or the person’s family
  - Aids and Equipment / Assistive Technology - where essential

- A person can be supported by more than one support worker when leaving home for one of the four reasons

NOTE: in all circumstances services should be provided remotely where possible
3. Stay at Home Directions- Stage 4

**Face masks**
- All disability support workers must wear a face mask regardless of where they work in Victoria- this is a requirement for both Stage 3 and Stage 4 restrictions

**Travel**
- Disability support workers may travel into restricted areas to provide essential disability services
- A person may travel more than 5 km to access an essential support, if this is necessary

**Exercise & Restricted Activities**
- Under stage 4 restrictions exercise is restricted to one hour a day
- A person may only exercise with one other person (no household groups)- as above the person can have two support workers.
- Recreational activities are not able to be undertaken; for example, golf, fishing
- Other restricted activities:
  - include indoor physical recreation and sport
  - outdoor sport and recreation
  - play centre or publicly accessible playground
  - skatepark
  - outdoor communal gym equipment
  - entertainment facilities.
Regional Areas

- Stay at Home Directions - Stage 3 commence in regional areas at 11:59pm on 5 August.
- These are the same restrictions that have been operating in the Mitchell Shire.
- There are four reasons that you can leave home:
  - Shopping for food or other essential items
  - To provide care giving, for compassionate reasons or to seek medical treatment
  - For exercise (applies to outdoor exercise, and with only one other person or members of your household)
  - Work or study, if you cannot work or study from home.
- Otherwise, you must stay home.

When leaving home you must wear a mask or face covering.

Restricted Activities

- Any support services provided must be consistent with the Restricted Activities (Restricted Areas) Directions
- These Directions include restrictions on indoor and outdoor activities and the numbers of people who may be involved.

NOTE: Further information will be provided when available.
5. Key issues for further work: Workforce capacity and mobilisation

**Additional workforce capacity**
- Backfill of workers self-isolating
- NDIA has established matching platforms to connect with available workers
- Continuing to work with the NDIA to match available workers to where they are required

**Workforce mobilisation**
- Great work to-date by providers to reduce worker mobilisation within organisations
- Work with the sector to develop a framework for further minimising workforce mobility
- Need to ensure sufficient availability of workforce to enable continued service delivery
Are day programs still allowed to operate? Should clients still be attending?

- Programs are still able to operate if they comply with physical distancing and other specified requirements.

- Due to the risk of potential community transmission attendance should only occur if considered absolutely essential. It is not considered essential for people who are living in disability residential services.

- The strong message of the Stage 4 restrictions is that everyone should be limiting their movement in the community at this time.
Q Would it still be allowed for support coordinators to visit participants at home, especially for those that are deaf and don’t have the technology to access face time or other means to do meetings online?

- All services should be provided remotely if possible. If a person is unable to communicate via remote access, then face to face visits can occur with appropriate infection control measures.

Q Can families travel to visit their son or daughter in an SDA if it more than 5km away?

- Yes. However, families should consider whether the visit is necessary and can be provided remotely. Under the Care Facilities Directions, only one person may visit per day for a maximum of one hour.
8. Q&A

If a support worker takes a client out for exercise for one hour, can the support worker still do his/her own personal exercise for one hour?

➤ Yes, the worker is working when he/she takes the client out for exercise. The worker is still able to leave his/her home on the same day for their own exercise.

Can NDIS participants travel beyond 5km to receive essential therapy services?

➤ Yes if the therapy is essential and cannot be provided closer to home.
DHHS Update – Department’s response to service providers
Disability Rapid Response Group

Phil O’Meara,
Director, Disability and Communities Branch,
Children, Families, Communities and Disability Division, Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Health and Human Services: COVID-19 support for service providers

Phil O’Meara, Executive Director, Disability and Communities Branch, Department of Health and Human Services

4 August 2020
1. Priority actions: Outbreak response - preparation

- COVID-19 plan for disability services sector
- National Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability
- Practice advice
  - Hand hygiene, cough etiquette, social distancing
  - Appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment
  - Guidance on public health directions
- Infection control training
- Business continuity and preparedness training
- Infection Prevention and Control Outreach Team - pre-emptive visits to accommodation providers
  - Advice and support on infection control procedures and outbreak preparedness
2. Priority actions: Outbreak response - intervention

- **Outbreak Management Protocol**
  - Details roles and responsibilities of DHHS, NDIA and NDIS Commission

- **On identification of outbreak at disability accommodation setting an Outbreak Management Team is established**
  - Co-chaired by DHHS and provider
  - Includes NDIA representative
  - Oversees and supports implementation of provider’s Outbreak Management Plan
  - Facilitates emergency PPE, in-home testing, nursing surveillance support

- **NDIA has extended SIL supports for positive COVID-19 cases**

- **Disability Incident Case Manager supporting people, families and providers where suspected or confirmed case**

- **Workers can access COVID-19 Test Isolation and Worker Support Payments**
3. Disability Rapid Response Group (DRRG)

**Aim:**

Protect the health, safety and wellbeing of people with disability and staff in impacted service settings to contain, control and end outbreaks as quickly and safely as possible. Through preventative strategies minimise the likelihood of outbreak.

**Priority areas:**

- Supporting prevention and preparedness activities through coordination of visits to disability residential services and dissemination of resources and tools to the sector
- Coordination between the NDIA, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and Department of Social Services that articulate roles and responsibilities to support joint management of COVID-19 outbreaks in residential services
- Working with each provider to determine appropriate support response based on public health requirements and clinical advice, including assistance with infection prevention and control; PPE; workforce; communications; supporting residents at the facility
- Facilitating access to clinical services
- Assisting with any emergency disability accommodation arrangements
4. Dedicated disability support and advice to outbreak management teams

The DRRG will provide dedicated disability capability to support outbreak management throughout the course of an outbreak in a disability setting, including the allocation of a ‘Disability Incident Case Manager’.

The assessment by the public health outbreak management team will guide the extent of support provided, which may be phone check in only or more intensive on site support where necessary. This may include:

- support to the service provider to implement their outbreak management plan and immediate actions as recommended by the public health team
- provision of disability specific advice to support the implementation of recommended outbreak management actions
- seeking advice from the Office of Professional Practice where residents exhibit behaviours of concern or there are restrictive intervention implications
- assistance with processes to access priority testing, in reach nursing or emergency accommodation to meet isolation requirements, if required
- work with the NDIA as necessary to ensure necessary adjustments to individuals plans for continued necessary supports
- support communication and problem solving between the service provider, the public health outbreak team and the NDIA
5. Supporting a timely response to outbreaks

- Timely information flows are critical to ensure responses to outbreaks are quickly mobilised.

- To support the DRRG to respond immediately to advice of positive cases of COVID-19 in residents and staff in disability residential services, an additional notification requirement has been put in place.

- We are asking providers to email the department directly as soon as they receive advice about a positive COVID-19 test. This includes if the advice was received directly from the employee, medical professional supporting resident or from the department’s Tracing Team.

- Upon receipt of this notification, the DRRG will follow up with individual services to quickly assess priority issues and needs. The team will work closely with contact tracing and outbreak management to ensure an integrated and coordinated response.

- This additional notification process will complement advice on new cases that is being received directly from the NDIS Quality and Safety Commission to the department.

- **WHEN THERE IS A COVID-19 POSITIVE CASE IN YOUR SERVICE PLEASE EMAIL DRRG@dhhs.vic.gov.au**

- Providers of transfer services should continue to report as per existing reporting mechanisms.
Public Health Update

Professor John Catford
Senior Medical Adviser
DHHS
NDIA Update

Chris Faulkner - Director, NDIA

Gerrie Mitra - Gerrie Mitra, General Manager, Provider and Markets Division, NDIA
Q&A

NDS has received many questions in relation to this topic, and will follow up on remaining questions and circulate responses to registrants in coming days.
Thank you