# Support for National Disability Insurance Scheme participants and providers through COVID-19

To stay safe and keep others safe:

* Practise [good hygiene](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/good-hygiene-for-coronavirus-covid-19) and regularly and thoroughly wash your hands.
* Maintain [physical distancing](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/physical-distancing-for-coronavirus-covid-19), keep at least 1.5 metres away from others.
* If you feel unwell get tested at a [nearby testing location](https://widget.nhsd.healthdirect.org.au/v1/widget/search?widgetId=2bd9a3ab-54e6-4ddf-a9df-44fef0c2e81b&types=%5bservices_types%5d:all+services&filters=%5bprograms%5d:covid+19&delivery=PHYSICAL). Return home immediately and [self-isolate](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/isolation-for-coronavirus-covid-19).
* If your condition worsens contact your GP or a health professional. If you become very unwell and are having trouble breathing contact triple zero, you may need to be admitted to hospital.

## Disability Information Helpline

The Disability Information Helpline is for people with disability, their families and carers who need help because of coronavirus (COVID-19). The Helpline is free, private and fact-checked.

You can contact the Helpline in the following ways:

* Phone (free call): 1800 643 787
* If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can also call the National Relay Service on 133 677.

The Helpline is available Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm (AEST). It’s not available on national public holidays.

Find out more on the [Department of Social Services website](https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/information-and-referrals-for-people-with-disability-and-their-supporters-about-coronavirus-covid-19) .

## NDIS participants

A number of new measures have been introduced to ensure essential support is in place for NDIS participants and providers through the COVID-19 pandemic. These include:

* face-to-face planning shifted to telephone meetings where possible ensuring continuity of support
* NDIS plans to be extended up to 24 months
* action plan to ensure NDIS participants and their families continue to receive the essential disability supports they need
* more flexibility in core and capacity building supports
* proactive outreach to high-risk participants nationally and is areas under increased restrictions
* access low cost AT items to ensure services can continue to be delivered virtually
* temporary changes to allow participants in Victoria and New South Wales to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) for personal care
* new support items have been introduced so providers can claim for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used when delivering face-to-face supports assisting participants with daily living in New South Wales and Victoria
* support for participants and providers in Supported Independent Living to ensure participants in shared living arrangements can safely self-isolate and continue to get the care they need
* support for providers and participants living in residential settings in Victoria with a panel of experienced disability providers appointed to offer additional workforce support plus an experienced provider to deliver a clinical first response capacity, if needed.
* publishing [the NDIS access request forms](https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply) online.

These measures are being put in place by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) who is working closely with the Department of Social Services and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission), as well as the Department of Health and state and territory governments.

Participants should contact the NDIA on 1800 800 110 if they need to talk to a planner, make changes to their plan or are having trouble sourcing services due to COVID-19.

More information about COVID-19 for NDIS participants and their families and carers is available on the NDIS website: [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au).

## NDIS providers

A range specific provider measures have been introduced to ensure essential support is in place for NDIS participants through the COVID-19 outbreak including:

* the temporary introduction of a 10% loading and cancellation arrangements, and
* one-off advanced payments to providers to help them continue to run their businesses and deliver services during the initial COVID-19 response.

The NDIA is here to support providers and share advice about any changes that may affect their business throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes:

* additional information about support for Supported Independent Living providers,
* updates to claiming and [cancellation policies](https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/providers-coronavirus-covid-19/service-bookings-and-cancellations), and
* the provision to use NDIS funding to pay for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used when delivering face-to-face supports assisting participants with daily living in New South Wales and Victoria and the participant agrees.

[Providers are expected to](https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/providers-coronavirus-covid-19/provider-obligations) continue delivering supports to NDIS participants and prioritise supports to meet the immediate needs of participants.

All NDIS service providers must notify the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission of any change to delivery of their services.

More information for NDIS providers and disability support workers is available on the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission website: [www.ndiscommission.gov.au](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au). This includes provider obligations, how to reduce the risk to participants, and links to updates and resources.

Providers are encouraged to regularly check the [Department of Health](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/advice-for-people-at-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-disability) for the latest advice, including specific advice [for the disability sector](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/advice-for-people-at-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-disability) .

## Supporting Victorians

New temporary measures to support providers and participants living in residential settings in Victoria:

* a panel of experienced disability providers will offer additional workforce support, such as advice, support staff and isolation accommodation for providers of residential organisations to access as needed due to the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19).
* Aspen Medical will provide clinical first response for any identified outbreak to ensure that infection control procedures, personal protective equipment (PPE) and nursing support is in place for residents and workers if needed.

The arrangements support providers to ensure the ongoing delivery of support to NDIS participants in residential settings in Victoria. The panel arrangements and clinical first response assist us to respond to the evolving circumstances in Victoria. These measures will help ensure all NDIS participants are supported and are safe during the pandemic.

For specific advice for providers operating in Victoria, including new advice about face masks for disability support workers in hot spot areas, [visit the NDIS website](https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/advice-victoria).

## Purchasing personal protective equipment

We have implemented temporary changes to funding of personal protective equipment (PPE) for personal care where COVID-19 is active your community and the use of PPE is consistent with current health advice.

Participants can now recover the costs to purchase PPE items using your NDIS funds, if you;

* receive an average of at least one hour a day of face-to-face daily living supports, and
* live in Victoria or New South Wales.

We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates if the situation changes in other states and territories.

If a participant needs PPE items like face masks, face shields and gloves, and the use of these items is directly related to face-to-face daily living supports, they can use their core supports budget to purchase these items. Plan and self-managed participants can purchase PPE and record and claim their purchases in the usual way. Agency-managed participants can purchase PPE through registered providers.

We encourage participants to keep an adequate supply of the essential products, but do not stockpile more than they need.

If participants need to purchase face coverings or masks for use outside the home, this is still an everyday expense, and they cannot use their NDIS funds to pay for them. Hand sanitiser continues to be a personal expense.

Find out more about the additional measures including when and [how providers can charge for PPE](https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/5048-delivering-ndis-during-covid-19-vic-nsw-participants-able-claim-ppe).

## More information

### Information for the whole community

For the latest advice, information and resources on COVID-19, go to [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au) or call the national Coronavirus Health Information Line on **1800 020 080**. The information line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available at [www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts](http://www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts)

### Information for participants

Information for NDIS participants is available through the NDIA at [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)/coronavirus or on **1800 800 100**. NDIA’s website includes comprehensive information and regularly updated FAQs for participants, families and carers.

### Information for providers and workers

Information and resources for NDIS providers and disability support workers are available through the NDIA at [www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/providers-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/providers-coronavirus-covid-19) and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission at [www.ndiscommission.gov.au](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au) or **1800 035 544**.