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Providers are encouraged to regularly check the [Department of Health](#) and [state or territory](#) specific information for the latest advice.

COVID-19 Health Professionals Disability Advisory Service

This [telephone advisory service](#) has been established by the Commonwealth Department of Health to provide specialised advice for health professionals involved in the care of people with disability diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

Some people with disability may become anxious in these situations and require reasonable adjustments to their healthcare to ensure they receive COVID-19 testing or treatment, with minimum distress. Specific support may be required to address communication and management issues, such as behaviours of concern and the reduction of risk to the patient and staff involved in the process.

Calls to the Advisory Service will be answered by health professionals with disability service qualifications and experience working with people with disability.

Health professionals can phone the service on 1800 131 330 - it is available 24 hours, seven days a week.

Health and safety

What is the latest advice about personal protective equipment (PPE)?

For up-to-date advice about PPE for disability support workers and participants, visit [Latest advice from NDIS](#).

Stay updated with the latest advice from your [state or territory's public health unit](#) to ensure you and your workers are complying with local guidance about when to use PPE when supporting people with disability.

The Department of Health has developed [advice for people with disability](#) and [providing disability support services during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) including:

- [providing disability support services during COVID-19](#) on personal protective equipment (PPE)
- a [video for disability support workers](#) on wearing PPE
- a [buyers guide](#) to purchasing PPE
- a health professional's [disability advisory service hotline](#) .

It is important that workers undertake the [COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#) .

The [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#) has more information on infection prevention and control training for support workers.

Where can I learn about infection control?

You can access an [online training module COVID-19 infection control training](#) for all support workers, including those in disability and aged care.

The training covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19, including:

- COVID-19 - what is it?
- signs and symptoms
- keeping safe - protecting participants and your workforce
- mythbusting.

Can I get PPE from the National Medical Stockpile?

The Australian Government still has a strategic reserve of vital drugs, vaccines, antidotes and protective equipment for use in national health emergencies.

As Australia is moving towards COVID normal, and with PPE readily available, participants and providers should first source appropriate PPE from a local supplier.

Participants and providers are reminded to only purchase the PPE that is required. In the event of another national health emergency or in the unlikely event of a shortage in PPE, the National Medical Stockpile will be available to front line services on an as-needs basis.

Who is responsible for purchasing PPE / masks for participants?

If a participant's NDIS funds are plan-managed or NDIA-managed, participants can purchase PPE through registered providers. Self-managed participants can choose where they purchase PPE and record and claim their purchases as per the usual process.

Participants who have a reasonable and necessary need for PPE when their disability worker is supporting them, and receive an average of at least one hour a day of face-to-face daily living support, can use their NDIS funds to purchase PPE.

See [participant FAQs](#) for more information.

Providing services

Can providers continue to deliver NDIS supports during restrictions?

Disability services need to consider the impact of any activity on an individual's health including any underlying medical conditions and vulnerability, and the necessity of undertaking the activity.

The Australian Government has [advice about providing health care face-to-face during COVID-19](#).

Stay updated with the latest advice from your [state or territory's public health unit](#) to ensure you and your workers are complying with local guidance.

The NDIS National Quality and Safeguards Commission also provides regular advice and alerts for registered NDIS providers about COVID-19. Find out more about [provider obligations during COVID-19](#).

How should providers/support workers deliver services within the physical distancing guidelines?

Workers should refer to their relevant [state or territory government](#) health departments for the latest advice and restrictions.

Online training for support workers on infection prevention and control of COVID-19 is available on the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission website](#).

The Department of Health has information about [providing disability support services during COVID-19](#) and [COVID-19 advice for people with disability](#) .

Telehealth can be used where appropriate and with the agreement of the participant to reduce risk of exposure to COVID-19.

To ensure continuity in NDIS funded supports and services during the COVID-19 situation, we have continued the [flexible approach for low cost AT items](#).

A number of requirements need to be met before participants can use NDIS funds to buy low cost AT items. See more details on the [Using your budget](#) FAQ page.

Can NDIS providers cross state borders to deliver services?

Workers may require permits to cross state borders. Please check the latest requirements for your area, as these are changing regularly.

- New South Wales – travel advice and alerts. [More information for NSW](#) .
- Victoria – travel advice and alerts. [More information for Vic](#) .
- Queensland – border restrictions and travelling. [More information for Qld](#) .
- South Australia – travel restrictions. [COVID-19 health information](#)
- Western Australia – travel registration requirements. [More information for WA](#) .
- Tasmania – travel from risk areas. [More information for Tas](#) .
- ACT – travel advice and alerts. [More information for the ACT](#) .
- Northern Territory – interstate arrivals and quarantine. [More information for the NT](#) .

Providers unable to deliver services due to border restrictions should contact the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#) using their [Notification of event – COVID-19 \(registered provider\) form](#).

How can providers better understand what happens when a participant's plan is automatically extended?

The NDIA has made changes to make sure participants have sufficient funding to meet essential needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This includes taking a flexible approach to amending plans and, where necessary, shifting capacity building funding to core supports funding.

If we have been unable to undertake a plan reassessment by the time a participant's current plan ends, it will be automatically extended by 12 months.

Extended plans will have the same Core and Capacity Building budget funding (excluding Capital) as the current plan.

As part of the automatic extension we will follow up and, if the participant would like to, complete a plan reassessment. As part of a plan reassessment we will discuss with participants the option of having a plan in place for up to 24 months.

Once a new plan is finalised, it replaces the extended plan.

Participants can phone 1800 800 110 for urgent assistance.

For more information, see the [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) FAQs for participants](#).

Where appropriate, can providers use telehealth to deliver therapy supports as an alternative to face-to-face service delivery? Are there any restrictions or guidance?

Telehealth can be used where appropriate and with the agreement from the participant to reduce risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Telehealth services can be offered to participants who are not, or cannot be, in the same physical location as the provider. Providers must ensure the standard of care delivered through telehealth is equal to face-to-face care.

A new 'Telehealth' claim field has been added to the myplace provider portal for supports delivered via telehealth.

Good practice for NDIS providers delivering telehealth include:

- ensure the service agreement does not prohibit telehealth
- providers and participants should discuss the risks and appropriate service delivery
- providers and participants should discuss the role of the participant in telehealth and the participant confirm they have the necessary technology and/or assistance from other people to effectively engage in telehealth
- the provider should document a risk analysis outlining how service delivery via telehealth is appropriate and presents less risk than face-to-face service delivery
- the provider notes on the service booking / invoice / quote / report that the service was completed via telehealth with the participant's permission
- after restrictions are lifted, the provider ensures the participant is reassessed face-to-face.

Providers should ensure they meet the [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) and [NDIS Practice Standards](#) to ensure quality service provision.

To assist participant access to supports and interpreting services being delivered online, a new support item was added to the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#) on 30 April 2020.

This enables access to capacity building funds for low cost assistive technology (AT) such as smart devices.

A number of requirements need to be met before participants can use NDIS funds to buy low cost AT items - refer to [Using your budget](#) FAQs for more details.

What needs to be included in the written advice to support participants purchasing low cost assistive technology?

Where a specific item is required to maintain existing supports during a period of physical distancing or isolation, written evidence is required from the provider of the support to confirm that the AT item will be the most appropriate solution to provide continuity.

This evidence is required prior to purchase of the AT item, but because the NDIA does not provide extra funding for such items, it does not need to be sent to the NDIA for pre-approval.

This written advice needs to be provided to the NDIA for audit purposes.

- Self-managed participants or plan managers can upload the written advice from their provider direct to the participant record.
- Providers can email it to enquiries@ndis.gov.au with the subject line 'Low cost AT flexibility evidence'.

Providers and plan managers should also keep a copy of this written advice in case the NDIA requests it at a later date.

The written advice should include:

- the participant's name and NDIS number
- confirmation that delivery of current supports in the participant's plan have been (or would be) significantly hindered due to physical distancing restrictions (or other consequences of COVID-19) and that alternative solutions to maintain delivery/outcome have been considered, but do not fully address the limitations
- how the device is necessary to maintain supports and services while maintaining physical distancing requirements

- the specific technologies and associated accessories required, and that these represent the lowest specification capable of delivering the benefit
- that the participant is able to use the device/s to access the support.

Before the participant, nominee or provider makes a claim for the selected item, the participant should be sure that:

- the participant does not already have this type of item, another suitable item or access to the item
- a similar or suitable item has not been funded by another service system (such as education) that the participant could use
- the item or circumstances are not specifically excluded under this policy.

The conditions for purchasing a low cost AT item with existing NDIS funding are listed on the [Assistive technology explained](#) page.

Is there guidance about managing behaviour support and restrictive practice during COVID-19?

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has published fact sheets on:

- [managing behaviours of concern and new or increased restrictive practices during COVID-19 isolation](#)
- [COVID-19 behaviour support and restrictive practices](#) .

When a participant needs additional support not included in their plan, how will this be covered?

Our priority is to ensure participants are supported to meet their essential needs. This includes taking a flexible approach to amending plans and, where necessary, shifting Capacity Building funding to Core supports funding.

For supports not included in a plan, special teams of planners are available to help make urgent changes to plans. Participants can phone 1800 800 110 and select option '5' for urgent assistance.

This page current as of
8 September 2022