3 September 2020

The Agency and NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission (NDIS Commission) have jointly released an open letter to all Victorian participants, their families and carers. Read the letter in full below. An easy read version is available.

Hello

We wanted to write to you to remind you of the support available through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

With coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions still in place in Victoria, we also wanted to let you know where to go to ask questions about your NDIS plan, your providers or the services you rely on.

We understand there is a lot of information in the community and we are writing to all participants in Victoria to share with you what you should expect from your NDIS providers and supports during this time as well as changes to what you can buy with NDIS funding.

This letter also explains what to do if you are concerned about the quality or safety of the supports.

What to expect from providers

Your provider should do their best to keep you safe and protect you from the risk of catching coronavirus (COVID-19). They should keep providing the supports you need to maintain your health, safety and wellbeing.

Because of current physical distancing and self-isolation rules, your provider may need to make some changes to the way they support you. If there are any changes to your supports or services, your provider should explain these to you and seek your views about them. They should ask you what supports are important to you and consider this when they make changes.

Your NDIS provider must tell the NDIS Commission if coronavirus (COVID-19) is having a significant impact on the supports and services you receive.

Protecting yourself and others

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has made changes so you can now use NDIS funding to pay for personal protective equipment (PPE) 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.

If you need personal protective equipment (PPE) items like face masks, face shields or gloves, you can use your core supports budget in your NDIS plan to buy these items. Plan and self-managed participants can purchase PPE and claim their purchases in the usual way. Agency-managed participants must use registered providers.

If you need to buy face coverings or masks to use outside the home, this is an everyday expense and you cannot use your NDIS funds to pay for them.

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation changes, the NDIA will continue to review how Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is funded and provided in areas with significant outbreaks, such as the current situation in Victoria. For the latest information about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) visit the NDIS website.

If you are concerned about your NDIS budget and your situation has changed you should contact the NDIA on 1800 800 110 so we can discuss your situation and make changes to your plan.

It’s OK to complain

If you are unhappy with the quality or safety of your supports and services you can speak to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) about your concerns. Whether or not these issues relate to COVID-19, it is always ok to speak up.

For example, if you don’t think your provider is communicating with you properly about changes to your supports, or if the changes are causing you distress, you can complain to the NDIS Commission by:

- calling 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677. We can arrange an interpreter for you.
- National Relay Service and ask for 1800 035 544.
- completing a complaint contact form .

If you have questions or are worried about your NDIS plan or budget call the NDIS on 1800 800 110.

Find out more

The NDIS Commission has a dedicated COVID-19 webpage that has links to updates and resources for NDIS participants. There is also a COVID-19 information pack for NDIS participants .

Fact sheets are available in Auslan and Easy Read formats, and in 11 other languages. Braille copies are available on request.

The NDIS website has information about COVID-19 for NDIS participants. If you have questions or need advice, call the NDIS on 1800 800 110.

The Victorian Government also has a website with information for people with disability . It includes details about current restrictions, wearing face masks, and where to get more information and support.

If you have a question or concerns about COVID-19, contact the Disability Information Helpline on 1800 643 787. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech impairment, you can also call the National Relay Service on 133 677.

The Australian Government Department of Health website has information about protecting yourself from COVID-19, managing your mental health, and getting access to important services like telehealth and prescription medications.

This is a challenging time, but we will keep working with your NDIS providers to support your health, safety and wellbeing, and we are here to help you if you have any concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Graeme Head AO
Commissioner, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

Martin Hoffman
CEO, National Disability Insurance Agency

Read the official, signed letter here (PDF 244KB)

Read the letter in Easy Read:

- Easy Read - Open letter to Victorian participants about COVID-19 supports (PDF 3.8MB)
- Easy Read (text only) - Open letter to Victorian participants about COVID-19 supports (DOCX 38KB)

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