Coronavirus (COVID-19): Information for providers on the use of personal protective equipment

The following information has been cleared by the Australian Government Department of Health.

Update: Check local guidance about using PPE

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues in Australia, some states and territories have updated their advice about when you should use PPE when providing supports and services for people with disability. Please 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.

Please read the below information in this context.

What is being done to prioritise access to PPE to support people at greatest risk from COVID-19 infection?

NDIS providers and self-managing participants who use PPE as a usual part of their support arrangements should continue to access PPE through their usual means. Where this is no longer possible, they should approach the National Medical Stockpile (NMS).

The NDIS Commission and the Department of Social Services are working with the NMS to make sure information is available about providers that are supporting participants whose conditions make them more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, based on Department of Health criteria. That information will assist the NMS in prioritising assessment of applications for access to PPE as it becomes available.

Access to PPE will be prioritised for those NDIS providers who deliver personal care and other activities that require close physical contact where there is an immediate threat to continuity of safe quality care due to lack of access to PPE, or where the participant has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.

NDIS providers and self-managing participants who can no longer access PPE supplies through usual means can contact the NMS by emailing NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au.

When should disability support workers use PPE?

Workers supporting NDIS participants should wear surgical masks or other items of PPE **when working with people who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19**, and when:

- advised by your local state or territory's public health unit, or

- it is part of the usual clinical care requirements,

- supports being provided are essential to the participant's life, health or safety, or

- contact between people exceeds Australian Government Department of Health guidelines for social distancing or isolation.

It is recommended that NDIS and disability support providers delivering supports to people in residential settings follow the advice from the [Communicable Diseases Network Australia](#) on preventing, controlling and managing COVID-19 outbreaks in residential settings.

Where a worker is suspected of having been exposed to COVID-19 or is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, they should not be providing direct support to NDIS participants. PPE is not an appropriate solution to workers in this situation.

The Australian Government Department of Health has produced [guidance for disability workers on using PPE](#), and a video, [Coronavirus (COVID-19): Wearing personal protective equipment for disability workers](#), that explains how and when disability support workers should use PPE.

How do I access PPE if I need it?

The National Medical Stockpile will consider applications for access to PPE from NDIS providers, prioritising access to those providers that have a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case.

Providers will need to include in their applications:

- • that they have been unable to source PPE through the open market
- • that their existing stocks have been depleted
- • who the requested masks are intended for
- • how the masks are to be prioritised and distributed in order to minimise transmission to greatest effect
- • how previous NMS stocks (if applicable) have been used efficiently and effectively.

Email the NMS at NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au.

How can I find information about infection risk in my service locations?

Some Departments of Health in states and territories are issuing information on the distribution of confirmed cases in local areas across their states.

You can find information about case levels and the current status in the [Australian Capital Territory,](#) [New South Wales](#), the [Northern Territory](#), [Queensland,](#) [South Australia](#), [Tasmania](#) and [Victoria](#).

More information

For the latest advice, information and resources visit the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) website.

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on **1800 020 080**. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450. Call the Disability Information Helpline on **1800 643 787** for disability-specific COVID-19 information and referrals.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is on the [Department of Health](#) website.

Information for NDIS participants and providers is available on the [NDIS](#) website and the [NDIS Commission](#) website.