

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the NDIS

**Information for self-managed
participants**

May 2020

Contents

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the NDIS.....	1
Contents.....	2
Introduction	3
Minimising your risk of exposure to COVID-19	3
Working with your providers	4
• Increased flexibility for low cost assistive technology	4
• Changes to cancellation policies.....	4
Your rights and obligations as an employer	5
• Health and safety.....	5
• Paying support staff	6
More information	6

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our priority is to support NDIS participants so that they can continue to receive the disability supports and services they need. This includes helping participants make informed choices around how to manage their health and safety and minimise their risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Participants who are self-managing their NDIS plan have greater flexibility in arranging and paying for their supports, as well as additional responsibilities as outlined in the [Guide to self-management](#). Self-managed participants also have choice and control around how to manage their health and safety.

This guide contains information to help self-managed participants use their NDIS plan and meet their obligations during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- practical tips on minimising your risk of exposure to COVID-19
- guidance on how to work with providers during the COVID-19 pandemic
- information to support participants who employ support workers directly
- guidance on the appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- information about the measures we are taking to support participants and providers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For general information on self-management, please continue to refer to the [Self-Management pages our website](#) and our [Guide to Self-Management](#).

Minimising your risk of exposure to COVID-19

There are a number of things you can do to minimise your risk of exposure to COVID-19 including:

- washing your hands frequently with soap and water
- reducing the number of people coming in and out of your home
- talking to your providers about what is essential and what can be put on hold
- ensuring your support workers wash their hands regularly, and clean door knobs, light switches, taps and other surfaces during their visit
- following the Australian Government's advice about [social distancing at home](#) (also known as physical distancing)
- following the latest guidance from your State or Territory Government.

We understand that people with disability may need to have close contact with their support workers, however wherever possible, we encourage you to reduce unnecessary physical contact.

For more information, please refer to one of the following trusted resources:

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resources \(Australian Department of Health\)](#)
- [Information for support workers and access to PPE \(NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission\)](#)

Working with your providers

All NDIS providers are expected to continue following NDIS rules, codes and policies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When it comes to maintaining your NDIS services and supports during this time, it is important that you talk with your providers to see what opportunities there are to access supports and services in alternative ways e.g. over the phone or online.

You will also want to discuss your health and safety needs with your providers, including the appropriateness of using PPE.

If your support workers are not able to deliver supports, your provider will be in touch to organise a replacement worker to attend to your needs. If you directly employ support workers, please refer to Your rights and obligations as an employer on the next page.

To help you maintain continuity of supports and services during this time, we have also made a number of temporary policy and process changes:

Increased flexibility for low cost assistive technology (AT)

To ensure continuity in NDIS funded supports and services during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we have temporarily broadened the flexible approach for low cost AT items.

Participants can now use their existing NDIS funding to purchase low cost assistive technology under \$1500 if the following criteria are met:

- the AT will maintain funded NDIS supports like a program or therapy
- the provider of supports has confirmed in writing that the device is necessary to continue supports and services while maintaining physical distancing requirements
- the AT is the lowest specification that will maintain funded supports
- the participant does not already have the item, another suitable item or access to the item
- the AT has not been funded by another service system (such as education)
- the AT or circumstances are not specifically excluded.

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

Changes to cancellation policies

From 25 March 2020, participants need to give 10 business days' notice for a service cancellation if they do not want to pay the full cost of that service.

This extended cancellation period allows providers to plan their staffing needs as early as possible.

If you cancel a service with less than 10 business days' notice and your provider is unable to find alternative billable work for their worker, they can claim 100% of the agreed support price.

For more information, please refer to one of the following trusted resources:

- [COVID-19 resources for NDIS participants](#) (NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission)
- [Information on the use of surgical masks](#) (Australian Department of Health)

Your rights and obligations as an employer

If you directly employ support workers (e.g. they are not contractors or employees of an agency), you have a number of rights and obligations as their employer that are outlined in the [Guide to self-management](#).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, you will also want to consider the following:

Health and safety

For support workers, your home is their workplace and providing a safe workplace is an important part of your health and safety responsibilities.

To maintain a healthy and safe environment for both you and your support workers, you should speak with them and agree on:

- the tasks you consider essential to your care
- the hours required to provide this essential support
- the way they will support you (either in person or remotely, if this is practical)
- how to maintain health and safety during this time and minimise the risk of infection.

PPE is a wearable item – like face masks and gloves. It is important you only use it where it is clinically necessary.

If your support workers do not routinely use surgical masks or other PPE, there is no need for them to start using it now unless either of you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

Surgical masks in the community are only helpful in preventing people who have COVID-19 from spreading it to others.

If you are unable to purchase PPE through your usual channels and you have a clinical need for PPE, you can request items through the National Medical Stockpile by emailing NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au

Self-managed participants can request PPE through the National Medical Stockpile on the basis that the items are for use by support workers, rather than the participant.

The following trusted resources will also assist you and your support workers to maintain a safe work environment:

- [Training module: Infection prevention and control for COVID-19 \(Australian Department of Health\)](#)
- [Training for NDIS workers during COVID-19 \(NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission\)](#)
- [Information on the use of surgical masks](#) (Australian Department of Health)
- [Information for providers on the use of PPE \(NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission\)](#)

Paying support staff

If you directly employ support workers (e.g. they are not contractors or employees of an agency), visit the [Services Australia website](#) for information on government assistance (e.g. JobSeeker and JobKeeper).

You should also ensure you are aware of your obligations as an employer through the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#).

More information

In a rapidly changing environment, it can be difficult to keep up-to-date with the latest information and guidance around COVID-19.

To stay up-to-date, we recommend you regularly visit the following websites to check for updates:

- [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#)
- [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#)
- [Services Australia](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#).

You can also sign-up to receive the [NDIS eNewsletter](#), follow us on social media or call us on 1800 800 100.