

SETS Community of Practice

Communique: COVID-19 Best Practice and Innovation Meeting (QLD/TAS)

Videoconference – 31 March 2020

The SETS Community of Practice (SETS CoP) held a special videoconference on 31 March for CoP members in Queensland and Tasmania to share their emerging best practice and innovative service delivery through the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Concerns for vulnerable groups

Attendees expressed concern for those most vulnerable and at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- new clients who do not have pre-existing relationships with SETS providers;
- clients at risk of or affected by domestic and family violence;
- clients with no or limited community support;
- clients who lack access to technology or internet;
- seniors and those with low digital literacy; and
- people on temporary visas.

Participants highlighted lack of access to high-speed internet and insufficient data, as a barrier for school aged clients with new home-schooling arrangements. There was great concern around the impact that this could have on their clients' education.

Additionally, some attendees expressed concern around access to computers and mobile phones, the implications of this for a range of clients, especially those experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence.

Strategies to best support clients include triaging client needs and ensuring regular contact via phone or other technology mediums. There were some concerns about the added time, costs and availability of TIS, to continue to provide support to SETS clients in social isolation.

Fear of increased discrimination and violence as a result of COVID-19, particularly in regional areas, was discussed. Attendees expressed some concern around the policing of social isolation and ability for neighbours to report, with the potential for racism and discrimination towards SETS clients.

Sharing of information

Attendees agreed that with the constant changes and updates, many of their clients are becoming confused with the information they are given about COVID-19. There was a general consensus that clients are experiencing both denial and anxiety at this time.

Attendees noted the importance of engaging community leaders, particularly in the sharing of information and linking new clients to SETS providers.

Use of Technology

Attendees shared the technology platforms they are using to deliver SETS during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many providers are using Facebook, WhatsApp, and Youtube, as clients are already familiar with these platforms. Some providers are in the initial stages of using Facebook live, Facebook groups and Zoom for group activities.

One provider shared the success of using WhatsApp for a playgroup. Others shared of linking volunteers to clients for one-on-one homework support, rather than their pre-existing homework clubs.

The issue of data and tracking of engagement from these platforms, was discussed. Some attendees expressed concerns about their ability to report and track data. Further, issues surrounding confidentiality and privacy of personal information when using technology platforms, was highlighted.

Informed consent

Participants discussed challenges with gaining informed consent as pre-existing consent forms were tailored to more face-to-face service delivery. Some providers mentioned they are recording verbal consent, as the ability to gain client signatures is difficult due to social distancing and work from home arrangements. Others reported sending a consent form via text message and receiving a response from clients in writing that they agree to the conditions of the form.