

SETS Community of Practice

Communique: VIC Specific COVID-19 Best Practice and Innovation Meeting

Videoconference – 20 October 2020

On 20 October, the SETS Community of Practice (SETSCoP) held its fifth videoconference for CoP members in Victoria to discuss their specific issues and challenges and to share their best practice in managing the impact of COVID-19 and public health restrictions on SETS.

Service delivery

Attendees shared some optimism about the easing of restrictions, however noted the importance of maintaining a realistic outlook and are aware of the challenges for their clients moving forward.

While many providers continue to deliver services online, some organisations have implemented the following as services return to face to face in some areas:

- COVID-19 assessments for all staff and clients
- infection control policies
- mental health support plans for staff and clients
- suicide intervention training to upskill staff and prepare for greater numbers of mental health presentations among clients
- ongoing collaboration among the multicultural sector with state funding to support local area needs
- hiring of more bicultural workers and employment support workers
- continued focus on developing of digital literacy skills for clients.

One provider shared that their caseload has doubled as services have become more accessible online and over the phone. However, form filing continues to be a challenge without face to face contact.

Considerations for clients

Many attendees expressed concern for clients, as many are experiencing anxiety and fear around the easing of restrictions. Attendees acknowledged already seeing more complex presentations by SETS clients. It is anticipated by providers that they will see a significant increase in mental health issues and domestic and family violence presentations once restrictions lift. Many providers are also considering the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and how best to support their clients in the 'new normal'.

Some ongoing issues for clients, shared by attendees include:

- digital literacy skills continues to be an issue for many clients
- fear of police and re-traumatisation
- many ineligible for SETS are needing assistance (i.e. over 5 years or on ineligible visas)
- some client families are separated due to lockdowns, with reluctance to apply for compassionate exemptions despite eligibility
- needing support with citizenship application process

Innovative projects and initiatives

Attendees shared some of their innovative projects, which include:

- 10,000 steps challenge: encouraging clients to leave the house for exercise and improving their levels of physical activity during the lockdown. Local police provided a recorded message to encourage engagement in the initiative.
- Weekly food baskets: soft engagement strategy to get clients to discuss their mental health and wellbeing and keep up to date with any changes to restrictions.
- Garden bed project: partnering with Bunnings and other stakeholders to provide supplies for 20 garden beds for older people in the Karen community who are isolated and have a background in farming.
- Community leaders in action: social media videos demonstrating what you can and cannot do during the lockdown.

Next VIC specific meeting

Attendees note value in the VIC-specific meetings as a source of collective understanding of current challenges and the sharing of innovative ideas and projects'. The meetings continue to facilitate a positive and encouraging dialogue for attendees during these difficult times.

All attendees provided support for another VIC specific meeting to be held in 3 weeks time.

Resources shared

[HeartChat Multicultural Mental Health](#)

[Women of the World 10,000 Step Challenge \(Hume Police and MRC North West\)](#)

[Fathering Across Cultures Website](#)

[MyAusCOVID-19 App \(Migration Council Australia\)](#)