**Guide note for frontline SETS staff supporting clients during the COVID-19 pandemic: Template for SETS providers**

The template guide note includes baseline information that SETS providers may wish to provide to SETS staff to support their engagement with SETS clients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The template is in Word format to allow for editing (including the deletion of this cover page) and can be tailored to provide locally-relevant and provider-specific information.

As a minimum, highlighted areas identify the information that should be contextualised by providers.

The template was prepared by the SETSCoP facilitator. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Samantha Chalmers on samantha.chalmers@migrationcouncil.org.au.

**Guide note for frontline SETS staff supporting clients during the COVID-19 pandemic**

**Purpose**

This guide note is intended for frontline Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) staff, including caseworkers, group facilitators and any other staff who engage directly with SETS clients.

**1 Why public health measures**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections. The most recently discovered coronavirus is COVID-19. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has deemed the current COVID-19 crisis as an international pandemic, due to the extent of its spread and the large number of cases appearing across the world.

Most people infected with COVID-19 experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without any intensive treatment. However, some individuals may be more vulnerable or prone to more serious illness (See 8 How to support the most vulnerable).

COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

•  direct close contact with an infected person or in the 24 hours before their symptoms appear

•  close contact with an infected person who coughs or sneezes

•  touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from an infected person, and then touching your face.

There are currently no treatments or vaccines for COVID-19. However, medical research is being undertaken.

Due to the level of contagion and to minimise transmission, public health measures have been put in place at a national level. Measures include:

* social distancing
* good hygiene
* restrictions on non-essential gatherings
* closure of non-essential places.

States and territories have also enforced their own public health measures. As measures will change over time, it is important to check government websites for the most up to date information.

**For more information, visit:**

[Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert (Department of Health](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert))

[What you need to know about Coronavirus (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19)

[How to protect yourself and others (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19)

[Coronavirus (World Health Organisation)](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

|  |
| --- |
| **For more information on state and territory specific measures, visit:** |
| [COVID-19 information by state and territory (HealthDirect)](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-information-by-state-and-territory)  |
| [COVID-19 (NSW Government)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19) | [COVID-19 (VIC Department of Health and Human Services)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) |
| [COVID-19 (WA Department of Health)](https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus) | [COVID-19 (QLD Government)](https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19) |
| [COVID-19 (SA Health)](https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public%2Bcontent/sa%2Bhealth%2Binternet/health%2Btopics/health%2Btopics%2Ba%2B-%2Bz/COVID%2B2019) | [COVID-19 (TAS Department of Health)](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable_diseases_prevention_unit/infectious_diseases/coronavirus) |
| [COVID-19 (NT Government)](https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/) | [COVID-19 (ACT Government)](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/) |

* 1. **Social Distancing at Work**

Where possible, it is preferred that you work from home. If you are unwell and displaying symptoms consistent with COVID-19, you must not attend your workplace and must stay at home for 14 days. If you are not sick and must work from the office, you need to maintain social distancing.

Steps for social distancing in the workplace include:

* keep 1.5 m from any other person
* change the way you greet others (i.e. no handshaking)
* postpone all non-essential meetings
* hold essential meetings via video conferencing or phone, where possible
* maintain good hand, sneeze and cough hygiene
* eat lunch at your desk or outside rather than in the lunch room
* clean and disinfect surfaces that people touch
* open windows or adjust air conditioning for more ventilation
* reduce any food handling and limit sharing of food at work
* avoid all non-essential travel.

**For more information, visit:**

[Social distancing for COVID-19 (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/social-distancing-for-coronavirus-covid-19)

**1.2 Hygiene**

Practising good hand hygiene, sneeze and cough etiquette, and keeping your distance from others, where possible, is the best defence against spread of the COVID-19 virus.

It is recommended that you:

* wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
* cough or sneeze into a tissue, or your elbow. Dispose of any tissues and wash your hands immediately
* avoid touching your face
* stay at home if feeling unwell
* refrain from smoking or other activities that may weaken your lungs.

The best way to prevent transmission is to be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads, in addition to complying with Australia’s public health measures.

**For more information, visit:**

[Coronavirus (World Health Organisation)](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

[Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert (Department of Health](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert))

[Clean hands protect against infection (World Health Organisation Facebook page)](https://www.facebook.com/WHO/videos/2959325900776937/)

* 1. **Non-essential gatherings and places**

There are restrictions on all non-essential gatherings. To stop the spread of the virus, the Australian Government has limited gatherings to only 2 people. This does not include members of your household. You must not gather with more than one other person in public, if they are not part of your household.

There are also restrictions on places, services and facilities. Generally, only those deemed essential are remaining open.

You must stay at home unless you:

* go to work or education (if unable to do so at home)
* shop for groceries
* exercise on your own or with one other
* attend medical appointments or compassionate visits.

States and territories have enforced their own restrictions on non-essential gatherings. As measures will change over time, it is important to check government websites for the most up to date information.

**For more information, visit:**

[Limits on public gatherings (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/limits-on-public-gatherings-for-coronavirus-covid-19)

**2 Impact on service delivery**

**2.1 Essential service**

The SETS program is an essential service. It is important that SETS continues to support refugees and vulnerable migrants who are settling in Australia. However, service delivery needs adjustment to suit the current situation and mitigate risk for both SETS staff and clients, through innovative ways to deliver services and achieve outcomes:

* All group activities must be postponed or delivered online
* Where possible, engagement with clients should be via online platforms or phone, rather than face to face.

**2.2 Alternatives to face to face services**

Alternative communication through the use of technology and phone are the preferred methods when interacting with SETS clients, colleagues, external services and the community. You should use the following online platforms:

\*SETS provider to list organisational preferences for programs and apps, consider referencing organisational IT policies.

However, if face-to-face contact is essential, please ensure that you are adhering to the current advice (See 1.1 Social Distancing at Work), as well as any specific organisational and workplace protocols. Any essential face to face contact should be discussed with the manager.

You should change your approach to greeting others, while being culturally sensitive, and normalise this as common practice during the pandemic. Clients should be made aware of the reasons behind this, with their and your safety in mind. You should explain that the usual way of interaction must change temporarily due to the current COVID-19 situation and encourage clients to do the same when they are in contact with others.

Should a need to engage an interpreter over telephone arise when meeting with a client face-to-face, practise social distancing. You and the client should take turns moving towards the phone to speak, and moving away when listening. Please remember that all other protocols—such as directing the conversation to the client not the interpreter, looking at the client when speaking and listening to the client—should be maintained.

All group sessions, if proceeding, should to be delivered via videoconferencing functionality, such as:

\*SETS provider to list organisational preferences for programs and apps (e.g. Zoom, WhatsApp or Facebook groups), consider referencing organisational IT policies.

**2.3 Tips for using online platforms**

You should familiarise yourself with the online platform you intend to use, and test both your video and audio functions prior to having a client meeting or holding an online group session.

When having a videocall with a client or a video group session, it is important to ensure that you and the client/group:

* are close to the microphone and speak clearly
* minimise any background noise
* minimise any distractions
* ensure good lighting
* take turns to speak (one person at a time)
* mute microphones when not speaking
* maintain confidentiality and privacy.

When working with interpreters on a video or phone call:

* speak clearly, at a normal pace and repeat if technology glitches
* ensure the client, interpreter and you take turns, with one person speaking at a time
* always direct your speech to the client (and if via video, look at the client when speaking or listening to them)
* clarify understanding by the client of what has been discussed
* use plain English language, explaining any complex concepts.

Consider the potential risks of engaging a family member, friend or web-based translation application as facilitators of interpretation. Where possible, video calling or phoning an interpreter through a language service provider (\*SETS provider to list organisational preferences for language service providers, consider referencing organisational language services policies) should be used, to ensure accurate and confidential interpreting support.

**3 Informed consent**

Online engagement, virtual groups and video consultations with clients are new methods of service delivery for the SETS program. It is necessary that clients provide informed consent to engage in any such activities delivered online or remotely under the SETS program.

A template consent form has been created with this in mind (See Appendix A). Consent can be given by a client either verbally or in writing.

**3.1 Principles of informed consent**

Informed consent must abide by the following principles:

1. the client needs to be given accurate information
2. the client needs to understand the information (interpreter engaged where required)
3. the client needs to make a choice.

Engage an interpreter for clients who may have difficulty understanding or would prefer this information to be given in their native language. Check understanding by asking the client if they have understood all that was provided (either in writing or verbally, depending upon the form of consent).

* 1. **When different types of consent may be required:**

Verbal consent is to be used in low risk situations. If the video consultation or online group session is not recorded, nor is any personal information disclosed to other parties, verbal consent is usually adequate.

Written consent is to be used where there are significant risks identified (i.e. the client is at high risk or the risk associated with the video consultation or online group session for this client is high).

Interpreting the content of a consent form may be used when the form is not translated into the client’s preferred language and/or the client does not have access to a physical copy of the consent form. Keeping with the recommendations for engaging an interpreter (See 2.3 Tips for using online platforms), you can read the consent form through an interpreter and complete the form according to the person’s answers as conveyed by the interpreter. All forms of consent must be case noted with client’s name, date and time of consent.

**For more information, visit:**

[Social media, information and communication technologies: Part 1 (Australian Association of Social Workers)](https://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/4673)

[Social media, information and communication technologies: Part 2 (Australian Association of Social Workers)](https://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/4674)

[Social media, information and communication technologies: Part 3 (Australian Association of Social Workers)](https://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/6473)

**4 Distribution of COVID-19 information to clients**

Adequate distribution of COVID-19 information and resources to clients and communities is necessary, so that they are well informed and up to date with the latest health advice. Clear and regular sharing of information could minimise their risk of contracting COVID-19.

You should:

* Emphasise to SETS clients the importance of abiding by public health regulations, reminding clients of the consequences (i.e. fines), should they not comply
* Reinforce the necessity for clients to observe social distancing, protecting the most vulnerable (i.e. older people) and socially isolate as required.

The Department of Health have developed and translated a range of resources on COVID-19. Additionally, the Australian Red Cross and SBS have developed some in-language resources which may be useful for your clients.

Migration Council Australia has developed the MyAus COVID-19 app – a multilingual app for Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, containing information about COVID-19, tips for prevention, caring for individuals and community, information on government policies in response to COVID-19 in Australia, and how to access health care and financial assistance. MyAus COVID-19 features short and engaging explainer videos, statistics and useful contacts. Translations of the app will include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. English
 | 1. Japanese
 | 1. Urdu
 |
| 1. Mandarin
 | 1. Italian
 | 1. Turkish
 |
| 1. Vietnamese
 | 1. Greek
 | 1. Dari
 |
| 1. Cantonese
 | 1. French
 | 1. Tamil
 |
| 1. Arabic
 | 1. Spanish
 | 1. Burmese
 |
| 1. Korean
 | 1. Thai
 | 1. Karen
 |
| 1. Khmer
 | 1. Indonesian
 | 1. Somali
 |
| 1. Persian (excluding Dari)
 | 1. Tagalog
 |  |
| 1. Punjabi
 | 1. Russian
 |  |

It is also essential to remind clients of important and emergency contact phone numbers and when to call.

It may also be helpful to share resources relevant to each State and Territory.

**For more information, visit:**

[Translated COVID-19 resources (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/translated-coronavirus-covid-19-resources)

[Coronavirus (Australian Red Cross)](https://www.redcross.org.au/coronavirus)

[Coronavirus information in your language (SBS)](https://www.sbs.com.au/language/coronavirus)

**Useful numbers:**

Emergency Triple Zero – 000

TIS National – 13 14 50

National Coronavirus Health Information Line – 1800 020 080 (24 hours/7days)

1800 Respect – 1800 737 732

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800

Qlife – 1800 184 527

Contact local GP for support.

\*SETS provider to include important local contact numbers.

**4.1 Changes to services**

There have been several changes to services and supports during the COVID-19 crisis. It is necessary that you are aware of the latest changes to services and can share this information with your clients and their communities.

**4.1.1 Healthcare services**

Changes to healthcare services include:

* general practices: remain open for face to face appointments and telehealth services
* antenatal care: appointments may be shorter or delivered by telehealth
* mental health services: many now delivered through telehealth
* allied health services (e.g. physiotherapy, dieticians, speech pathologists): will have limited face to face and some video or telephone consultations
* non-urgent hospital outpatient services (e.g. elective surgery): have been temporarily postponed or moved to telehealth
* non-urgent public dental procedures: have been suspended, with only emergency treatment available
* pharmacies: remain open, with a Home Medicines Service now available for people over 70 years (see 8.2 Home Medicines Service for more)
* ambulance and emergency departments: will continue to operate as usual.

Medicare now covers the cost of telehealth for a range of services including:

* GP consultations
* specialist consultations
* mental health services
* chronic disease management
* antenatal care
* after-hours care
* and other health services.

Telehealth is a good option for those self-isolating at home and for people with transport or mobility issues. It can also reduce the risk of attending general practices or other medical centres for people who are vulnerable, such as those over 70 years old.

**For more information, visit:**

[Limits on public gatherings for Coronavirus (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/limits-on-public-gatherings-for-coronavirus-covid-19)

[Find a health service (HealthDirect)](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services)

[COVID-19 National Health Plan – Primary Care Package – MBS Telehealth Services and Increased Practice Incentive Payments (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-national-health-plan-primary-care-package-mbs-telehealth-services-and-increased-practice-incentive-payments)

# **For more information on any changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS):**

[Coronavirus (COVID-19) information and support (NDIS)](https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus)

# **4.1.2 Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)**

AMEP delivery has now moved to online, or distance learning, or a combination of online and onsite learning. It is important to remind clients not to attend an AMEP learning site if they are unwell or have recently returned from overseas. They should self-isolate for 14 days instead.

**For more information visit:**

[Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) (Department of Home Affairs)](https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/amep/about-the-program)

**4.1.3 Universities, Schools and Childcare**

Most childcare centres are still open and operating, with priority given to working parents, vulnerable children and children with pre-existing enrolments. If your client is working, they may be eligible to receive free childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic. NAPLAN will not proceed in 2020.

Universities are now delivering their courses online. Some TAFEs are delivering online classes, while others have paused. It is important to contact the relevant university or TAFE for more details.

Arrangements for schools vary between states/territories. Some will be open for the next term, others remain closed and others are giving parents the option of returning to school or home schooling.

|  |
| --- |
| **For more on school arrangements for states and territories visit:** |
| [Department of Education NSW](https://education.nsw.gov.au/)  | [Department of Education VIC](https://education.vic.gov.au/) |
| [Department of Education QLD](https://education.qld.gov.au/) | [Department of Education SA](https://www.education.sa.gov.au/) |
| [Department of Education WA](https://www.education.wa.edu.au/) | [Department of Education TAS](https://www.education.tas.gov.au/) |
| [Department of Education ACT](https://www.education.act.gov.au/) | [Department of Education NT](https://education.nt.gov.au/) |
|  |  |
| **Home schooling resources for each state and territory in Australia:** |
| [Home schooling resources NSW](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/learning-from-home) | [Home schooling resources VIC](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/learning/Pages/home-learning.aspx) |
| [Home schooling resources QLD](https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/learning-at-home) | [Home schooling resources SA](https://www.education.sa.gov.au/our-learning-sa) |
| [Home schooling resources WA](https://www.education.wa.edu.au/learning-at-home) | [Home schooling resources TAS](https://www.education.tas.gov.au/learning-at-home/) |
| [Home schooling resources ACT](https://sites.google.com/ed.act.edu.au/act-home-learning/resources-to-support-home-learning)  | [Home schooling resources NT](https://nt.gov.au/learning/learning-together) |

**5 How to respond to a client or colleague with symptoms**

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to common colds and flus and can include:

* fever
* fatigue
* dry cough and/or sore throat
* aches and pains
* shortness of breath
* and very few experience diarrhoea, nausea or a runny nose.

While COVID-19 may bring serious illness to some people, it is likely that most people displaying these symptoms have a cold, allergy or other respiratory illness.

If a client has been in contact with a confirmed case and is demonstrating the above symptoms, you should provide (via video or phone) clear information about next steps, including supporting them to contact the National Coronavirus Health Information Line, for testing. Testing for COVID-19 includes a swab of the throat and nose.

Should a client or colleague need immediate healthcare, they can attend a GP or hospital emergency department. It is important, if displaying symptoms of COVID-19, that the healthcare provider is called ahead of time.

**If your client or colleague is having difficulty breathing contact 000.**

**For more information, visit:**

[COVID-19 symptom checker (HealthDirect)](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/healthdirect-coronavirus-covid-19-symptom-checker)

Coronavirus Health Information Line – 1800 020 080

[Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert (Department of Health](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert))

[Coronavirus symptoms (World Health Organisation)](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_3)

[COVID-19 information by state and territory (HealthDirect)](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-information-by-state-and-territory)

Find your closest COVID-19 clinic [click here](https://widget.nhsd.healthdirect.org.au/v1/widget/search?widgetId=2bd9a3ab-54e6-4ddf-a9df-44fef0c2e81b&types=%5Bservices_types%5D%3Aall+services&filters=%5Bprograms%5D%3Acovid+19).

**6 If your client is not eligible for Medicare**

Some clients who are not eligible for Medicare may have insurance. In these cases, they will need to check with their insurer to find out what is covered and how healthcare costs will be paid for or reimbursed.

For those ineligible for Medicare and without insurance, some states and territories will waive healthcare costs associated with COVID-19 if a person is treated in a public hospital or health facility.

**For more information visit:**

[Affected by Coronavirus (Services Australia)](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/affected-coronavirus-covid-19)

**7 What to do when a client or colleague tests positive**

Anyone who tests positive to COVID-19 should isolate at home to stop the virus spreading to other people. They should monitor symptoms every day, and if they are worsening, seek medical advice.

Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 should:

* stay isolated in the home (not complying with self-isolation when diagnosed may result in fines)
* be separated from other people in the home (e.g. stay in a different room and use a separate bathroom, if possible)
* wear a mask when in the same room as other people
* cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue and put used tissues straight into the bin
* not share dishes, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people. After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water.

For other people in the home:

* Restrict visitors who do not have an essential need to be in the home
* Keep vulnerable people out of the home (See 8 How to support the most vulnerable).A person with COVID-19 should not be isolated in a home with vulnerable people.

The local state public health department should be in contact with anyone who has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. They will monitor the person’s condition, provide advice on what to do and when to get help, and give instructions on when to end home isolation.

Once someone tests positive, it is important to identify any recent contact that this person has had with others, so that everyone can be appropriately screened and tested for the virus.

Should you be aware of a client or colleague who has tested positive, you must make your manager aware and (\*SETS provider to include organisational protocols for escalation points and reporting).

**For more information, visit:**

[Information for close contacts of confirmed case (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-close-contacts-of-a-confirmed-case)

[What you need to know about Coronavirus (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19)

**7.1 Self-isolation requirements**

Self-isolation means staying at home for 14 days.

It is mandatory for a person to self-isolate if they have COVID-19 or have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, or have arrived in Australia from overseas after 15 March 2020.

Even if they do not have symptoms, someone self-isolating should:

* not leave their home unless there is an emergency or to seek medical assistance
* not have visitors over
* arrange for another person who is not in isolation drop food or other essential items to them
* monitor for any symptoms of COVID-19.

Emphasise to your clients that non-compliance may put more vulnerable people at risk and is penalised by large fines.

**For more information, visit:**

[Self-isolation (self-quarantine) for COVID-19 (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-self-quarantine-for-coronavirus-covid-19)

**7.2 Supports for those with the infection or self-isolation requirements**

Services Australia provides income support for those who have contracted COVID-19 and have lost employment as a result or are already receiving income support payments. Remind your clients to not go into a Services Australia centre but call through.

**For more information visit:**

Coronavirus Health Information Line – 1800 020 080

[Affected by Coronavirus (Services Australia)](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/affected-coronavirus-covid-19)

[Self-isolation (self-quarantine) for COVID-19 (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-self-quarantine-for-coronavirus-covid-19)

**8 How to support the most vulnerable**

COVID-19 presents greatest risk to people aged 70 years and over, those with pre-existing chronic health conditions who are over the age of 65 and those with a weakened immune system.

Current advice is that older people should stay at home and limit face to face contact as much as possible. You should ensure that older clients have home-delivered shopping through home delivery services, family, friends or their community.

Remind your clients who have older adults in their families to limit face to face contact but maintain emotional support through phone and videocalls. Check in on older clients by a phone call or videocall, and ensure that despite physically isolating, they are not feeling lonely.

**For more information, visit:**

[COVID-19 (Coronavirus) information (COTA for older Australians)](https://www.cota.org.au/information/covid19/)

[Coronavirus advice for older people (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/advice-for-people-at-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-older-people)

[Coronavirus (World Health Organisation)](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

**8.1 Telehealth**

Telehealth services are great alternative to face to face consultations for older adults or those with pre-existing chronic health conditions to access a range of medical services (For more see 4.1.1 Healthcare services).

**8.2 Home Medicines Service**

A Home Medicines Service is now available for people over 70 years of age, other vulnerable people and those in self-isolation. Prescriptions can be sent by a digital image (such as email, fax or text), with medicines delivered to your client’s home. Eligibility for this service is that the vulnerable person must be Medicare-eligible or visiting from a country that has a [Reciprocal Health Care Agreement](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/reciprocal-health-care-agreements). This service can only be received once a month and local pharmacists should be contacted for more information.

**For more information, visit:**

[COVID-19 National Health Plan – Home Medicines Services information for consumers (Department of Health)](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-national-health-plan-home-medicines-services-information-for-consumers)

**8.3 Pregnant clients**

Despite being considered a vulnerable group, current expert advice is that pregnant women are unlikely to develop serious illness from COVID-19. There is no evidence to suggest that the virus can harm a developing baby in a mother infected with COVID-19, nor that COVID-19 causes developmental abnormalities in unborn children.

Mothers who are breastfeeding are encouraged to continue, with no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted through breastmilk. Pregnant women are encouraged to continue their antenatal care (either face to face or telehealth where offered) and birth their child at hospital.

**For more information, visit:**

[Coronavirus (COVID-19) statement (The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Gynaecologists)](https://ranzcog.edu.au/statements-guidelines/covid-19-statement)

**8.4 Family safety**

Social distancing and self-isolation can increase the risk of domestic and family violence. With many spending more time at home, tensions within families can increase, however this is not an excuse for violence. Remind your clients that all people deserve to feel safe and live free from violence.

Family violence tactics some people may use during COVID-19 are:

* withholding essential items such as food, medicine or hand sanitiser
* misinforming others about the pandemic
* controlling finances
* threatening or preventing other family members from seeking appropriate medical support
* monitoring and criticising parenting of the other parent
* further isolating family members, by forcing them to stay in specific areas of the home or taking away technological devices
* monitoring other family members phone use, emails or online messages
* using COVID-19 as an excuse for abusive and violent behaviour.

You can employ the following strategies with at-risk clients:

* Make them aware of the signs of domestic or family violence
* Encourage them to seek support if they are unsafe in their home and inform them of the supports and services available
* Inform them of the potential risks of using technology
* Encourage them to develop safety-plans and ensure that they are aware of emergency contact numbers
* Reiterate the importance of calling Emergency Triple Zero – 000 if they or someone else is in immediate risk of harm.

Please take extreme care when having conversations about domestic or family violence with at-risk clients, to prevent putting your client at greater risk.

**Fathering Across Cultures**

[Fathering Across Cultures](https://fatheringacrosscultures.org.au/) is a guide that provides advice and tips for settlement workers on how to engage fathers from migrant and refugee backgrounds, to better support them in understanding their role as a father and the expectations of parenting in Australia, while maintaining their cultural values.

In addition to the guide, there is a [mobile app](https://app.fatheringacrosscultures.org.au/en/menu/) for new and expectant fathers from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

**Emergency contact numbers include:**

Emergency Triple Zero – 000

TIS National – 13 14 50

1800 Respect – 1800 737 732

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Relationships Australia - 1300 364 277

Mensline Australia - 1300 789 978

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800

Qlife – 1800 184 527

[Domestic violence hotlines (White Ribbon)](https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/find-help/domestic-violence-hotlines/)

\*SETS provider to include any relevant local, state or territory services

**For more information on safety planning, visit:**

[Safety planning checklist (1800Respect)](https://www.1800respect.org.au/help-and-support/safety-planning/checklist)

|  |
| --- |
| **If you need support, please contact the relevant parenting helplines for your state or territory:** |
| Parentline New South Wales - 1300 130 052 | Parentline Victoria - 13 22 89 |
| Parentline Queensland and Northern Territory - 1300 301 300 | Parent Line Tasmania - 1300 808 178 |
| Parent Helpline South Australia - 1300 364 100 | Parentline ACT - 02 6287 3833 |
| Ngala Parenting Line Western Australia - 1800 111 546 |  |

**8.5 Mental Wellbeing**

The current COVID-19 situation, including the associated uncertainty and public fear, may be retraumatising for some SETS clients, particularly those who had experienced torture or trauma and those with mental health concerns.

Some symptoms of anxiety or depression include feelings, thoughts and behaviours such as:

* excessive fear, worry or feeling overwhelmed
* catastrophising or obsessive thinking
* feeling sad or irritable
* feelings worthlessness or hopelessness
* withdrawing contact from close family and friends
* relying on alcohol and drugs
* not doing usual enjoyable activities
* unable to concentrate
* changes to sleep or appetite.

Consider the following strategies:

* Ensure that clients are aware of the mental health supports and services available to them.
* For clients at-risk, normalise the anxiety and fear associated with COVID-19 as something experienced by most people during this period, while also encouraging clients to seek support should they need to.
* For clients expressing any suicidal ideation, ensure a thorough suicide risk assessment is undertaken and that they are immediately linked to appropriate support services.
* Remind clients to call Emergency Triple Zero – 000 if they or someone else is in immediate risk of harm.

Be aware of your own mental health and wellbeing. If you are feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, it is important to reach out to family, friends, colleagues or mental health services for support.

There has been some increased racism as a result of COVID-19. It is important that if a client brings up experiences of racism, you encourage them to share details of the incident and ensure they are adequately supported. Should the incident require a police response or report, please contact the local police station. Additionally, you may wish to seek advice from the Australian Human Rights Commission (details below).

**For more information, visit:**

[Multilingual information (Embrace Mental Health)](https://embracementalhealth.org.au/index.php/community/multilingual-information)

[FASSTT Members (FASSTT)](https://www.fasstt.org.au/members/)

[Kids Helpline](https://kidshelpline.com.au/)

[National helplines and websites (Beyond Blue)](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/national-help-lines-and-websites)

[COVID-19 information (Australian Human Rights Commission)](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/commission-general/covid-19-information)

Australian Human Rights National Information Service - 1300 656 419 04

**You may wish to remind clients of the following phone numbers:**

Emergency Triple Zero – 000

TIS National – 13 14 50

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

Qlife – 1800 184 527

Suicide call back service – 1300 659 467

\*SETS provider to include any relevant local, state or territory services

**9 Financial Support**

The economic impact of COVID-19 has and will continue to be felt by many, including SETS clients. You should endeavour to support clients to access the financial supports they may need during this time.

**9.1. Coronavirus Supplement**

The Coronavirus supplement is an additional $550 per fortnight for those who are existing or new recipients of:

* JobSeeker Payment
* Youth Allowance Jobseeker
* Youth Allowance for Students and Apprentices
* Austudy for Students and Apprentices
* ABSTUDY for students getting Living Allowance
* Farm Household Allowance
* Parenting Allowance
* Special Benefit

**9.2 Economic Support Payment**

The Economic Support Payment is a $750 one off payment if living in Australia and get an eligible payment or concession card between 12 March 2020 and 13 April 2020. Those eligible may receive a second $750 payment if they have an eligible payment or concession card on 10 July 2020. Paid from 13 July 2020.

**9.3 JobKeeper Payment**

The JobKeeper payment is $1500 per fortnight, per employee for eligible business and non-for-profit organisation.

**9.4. Emergency Relief**

The Australian Government has recognised the need to support the most vulnerable during COVID-19 and has invested additional resources for emergency relief.

**For more information about support payments, visit:**

[Coronavirus supplement (Services Australia)](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/coronavirus-supplement)

[Economic Support Payment (Services Australia)](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/economic-support-payment)

[JobKeeper Payment (Australian Taxation Office)](https://www.ato.gov.au/general/JobKeeper-Payment/)

[If you need a payment – coronavirus (COVID-19) (Services Australia)](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/affected-coronavirus-covid-19/if-you-need-payment)

[COVID-19 Information and Support (Department of Social Services)](https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-support#eme)

[Supporting businesses to retain jobs (Australian Government)](https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/Fact_sheet_supporting_businesses_4.pdf)

[More financial support for people affected by coronavirus (Services Australia)](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/news/more-financial-support-people-affected-coronavirus)

**For more information about emergency relief, visit:**

[Media release from Prime Minister, The Hon Scott Morrison MP on 29 March 2020 (Australian Government)](https://www.pm.gov.au/media/11-billion-support-more-mental-health-medicare-and-domestic-violence-services-0)

[Emergency Relief Services Directory (Department of Social Services)](https://serviceproviders.dss.gov.au/?postcode&ppp=20&programme&region&service=Financial%20Crisis%20and%20Material%20Aid%20-%20Emergency%20Relief&state)

[Emergency relief support for people on temporary visas (Australian Red Cross)](https://www.redcross.org.au/news-and-media/news/help-for-migrants-in-transition)

**Appendix A: Template Consent Form for the SETS program online- or technology-based service provision in view of COVID-19**

Due to the public health measures in response to COVID-19, many of the SETS program services are moved to online- or technology-based service delivery. This is done to ensure:

* Continued SETS casework support and group activities
* Maintaining the safety of SETS clients and staff through social distancing
* Adhering to local, state and federal restrictions.

I am aware that:

* Online- or technology-based service delivery may not be the same as face-to-face experience
* There may be some technical issues that could affect the service delivery
* While measures are in place to minimise risk of privacy and security breaches, protection against hacking or tapping of the video by outsiders cannot be guaranteed
* If engaged in a group, my contact details may be shared with other group members.

Further, I am aware that:

* I can raise any queries or concerns in relation to the above
* I have a right to access interpreting services when receiving services online or via technology
* I can stop engaging with online- or technology-based services at any time.

I agree to receiving services online or via technology.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Client) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature of Client) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

If obtained verbally:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Caseworker) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature of Caseworker confirming consent by Client) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Consent for Recording of Video and Photographs

I agree to have this video consultation recorded or to have photographs taken.

I am aware that:

* I have the right to see the video or the photographs
* The material will be stored securely
* The material will never be shared unless specifically authorised by me
* Protection against hacking or tapping of my recording by outsiders cannot be guaranteed.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Client) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature of Client) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

If obtained verbally:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Caseworker) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature of Caseworker confirming consent by Client) / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)