

SETSCoP

Communique: NSW COVID-19 Response Meeting

Videoconference – 26 August 2021

On 26 August 2021, SETSCoP members from NSW attended a NSW-specific COVID-19 Response meeting to discuss tools and resources to support clients throughout outbreaks and lockdowns and to identify emerging issues and areas of need for additional support.

Advocacy for the COVID-19 vaccine

Attendees noted that organising information sessions with health practitioners from the community to provide information in-language has been well received in the community. It allows people to ask any questions they may have about the COVID-19 vaccine in their own language and receive an in-language response.

Many providers also shared creative ideas, such as videos, gameshows, and community radio to engage other members of the community to share their experiences with the COVID-19 vaccine and encouraging others to go get theirs.

Vaccination clinics for CALD communities are considered key to help encourage people to get vaccinated as it allows them to book in a session with a bi-cultural worker that speaks their language and can help them talk through any concerns they may have.

Key concerns for clients

Providers shared some of the most common challenges for their clients which include:

- Increased mental health issues due to the lockdowns and fear of COVID-19 outbreaks.
- High levels of stress and trauma associated with heightened conflicts in country of origin. This has been particularly evident in the Burmese and Afghani community.
- Feelings of fatigue and being overwhelmed by the degree of online engagement.
- Normal practices of support such as being with family are not available to communities at the moment due to restrictions.
- Clients are starting to feel more isolated.

Many providers acknowledged that because of heightened conflicts in country of origin, many clients are not focussing on COVID-19 restrictions or the vaccine which makes it harder to discuss this with their clients.

Further, the ongoing updates around vaccine eligibility and the many videos about COVID-19 vaccines online have caused confusion among migrant communities. Providers note that there is a need to explain what happens when you get the vaccine, as well as the side effects.

Attendees noted the need for a collaborative approach around lockdown and restrictions. It is important for migrant communities to feel as if though government stands alongside them throughout these challenges.

Providers also shared information about group bookings at vaccine clinics that can be made by the provider for their clients.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Providers noted a significant increase in low levels of wellbeing within migrant communities. Deaths of community leaders and family members and being unable to come together to process grief significantly impacts the whole community. Especially in the Afghan community, suicide ideation and depression rates have increased since May.

Access to support is low, especially during lockdown. Attendees noted that the need to use an interpreter when calling the help lines available forms an additional barrier to clients seeking support.

Shared Resources

- For contact details of Health Practitioners of the Assyrian community
Carmen Lazar - clazar@assyrian.org.au
- Dr. Julie Ayre – Sydney Health Literacy Lab - julie.ayre@sydney.edu.au
- [COVID-19 Community Surveys](#)
- [Staying at home pack – tips for lockdown \(first edition\)](#)
- [Staying at home pack – tips for lockdown \(second edition\)](#)
- [Staying at home pack – tips for lockdown \(third edition\)](#)