

SETSCoP

Communique: ACT & NSW COVID-19 and Best Practice Meeting

Videoconference – 27 January 2022

On 27 January 2022, the SETS Community of Practice (SETSCoP) held a videoconference for CoP members in ACT and NSW to share their best practice and innovative service delivery, along with challenges faced through the recent outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Good News

Online webinar meetings have allowed for large numbers of clients to engage. A collaboration between three providers to deliver COVID safety information with health professionals engaged with 5000 individuals online. A number of participants also followed up after the sessions with questions. Some providers have had high levels of engagement with online group activities that have been delivered as a series. For example, one provider ran an employment series, which was delivered in connection to Thread Together (see link below).

Some offices have been able to return to **face-to-face services and events**, which is appreciated by staff and clients alike. Providers are finding ways to encourage clients to be confident in COVID-safe ways of engaging in the community through demonstrating in their office or in outdoor venues the use of masks, sanitiser and social distancing.

Multicultural Health NSW has collaborated with service providers to provide five **short videos for youth on mental health**. Other COVID safety videos were produced through a collaboration effort in Albury-Wodonga.

(See links below under Shared Resources)

Challenges

Continuing in the **online environment** is challenging for staff. There are still groups of clients who struggle to engage in digital spaces, particularly older people. When events online are successful the large number of individuals engaged are unable to be reported through the DEX system as there is a maximum number of people that can be entered. Also, individual online attendees details cannot be gathered.

Access to **Rapid Antigen Test kits** is a key concern. Both clients and organisations are seeking them and clients are concerned about the costs. Some clients are confused about when rapid antigen tests should be taken and the difference to PCR tests. This confusion about testing means some communities are not reporting their positive results or are avoiding getting tested.

There has been an increase in requests for **financial assistance** from clients. A number of organisations have been providing emergency relief through bill assistance, food vouchers and food packages, some of which are delivered to people's homes if in isolation.

Most organisations have had **last minute cancellations of events** which were planned in-person. This has impacted on the number of outcomes achieved and has been frustrating for staff, as the amount of time and effort required to book events is significant.

Due to government and other services also working from home, there have been **increased wait times** for responses from government and mainstream services, taking additional time for front line workers when assisting clients.

Some organisations have been working across **two jurisdictions**, which have had different restrictions in place, making it difficult for providers.

Young people have raised concerns about their **return to school and safety** for themselves and their families. In particular, there is concern that changes in what is considered a close contact may mean that students who have been in classes with a positive case may not be advised and they may become infected.

Clients, community leaders and service provider staff have all experienced **challenges with mental health**, due to the ongoing pressures of the pandemic, as well as other international events. Recently some providers have delivered workshops to discuss mental wellbeing, self care and mindfulness for clients. Some providers have proactively shared posts on social media to combat this (see below link to Hope Over Fear report). COVID care packs have been delivered to client's homes.

Shared Resources

Combined video for SSI's Youth Collective mental health and wellbeing campaign, in partnership with NSW MHCS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05rA3x0cXH4>

COVID Safety Videos – by Congolese young people from Albury-Wodonga:

<https://fb.watch/asFGWsO2Lu/>

<https://fb.watch/asFIL-eEo7/>

Thread Together – provide new clothing for clients needing an outfit to use at an interview or in a workplace

<https://threadtogether.org/>

Hope Over Fear report - <https://mwa.org.au/submissions-and-reports/hope-over-fear/>