

SETSCoP

Communique: SA COVID-19 and Best Practice Meeting

Videoconference – 31 January 2022

On 31 January 2022, the SETS Community of Practice (SETSCoP) held a videoconference for CoP members in South Australia to share their best practice and innovative service delivery, along with challenges faced through the recent outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Good News

Many organisations have been able to remain **open for servicing clients face-to-face if required** in urgent situations. The majority of services have continued via phone and online, due to recent COVID-19 outbreaks. Some appointments have been able to occur in outdoor spaces, such as parks.

Providers have collaborated to produce **health information videos** on COVID-19 vaccines in a number of languages. Further, several providers have hosted **vaccine clinics** within their office space, supported by bi-cultural staff, to encourage clients to get vaccinated.

Through the continued work of settlement service providers, there has been an **increase in the uptake of vaccines** amongst client groups.

Challenges

Vulnerable clients who had COVID-19—such as single mothers, those who experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence, and those disconnected from their communities—have had a lot of **difficulty accessing care for their children** when they had to attend doctors or hospitals, due to the restrictions in these settings.

Service providers are finding **clients are not attending appointments**, due to COVID-19 infections or fear of going into the community. Many group activities have been cancelled, including holiday programs, with some continuing in very small numbers.

Clients have had trouble **accessing rapid antigen tests**, particularly if they are required to visit clinics and if they have young children in their care. For those who have access, a number are **hesitant to report positive test results**, as they are fearful of judgement from their community.

Community leaders have hesitated to begin projects and in some cases delayed establishing associations during the pandemic, due to constant changes in restrictions and requirements.

Many providers described challenges with supporting clients into **housing**, due to a lack of supply. This has been amplified by a restructure in the housing service system in South Australia.

Continuous changes and the **ongoing need to communicate changes to clients** is putting pressure on service providers. In addition, some of the resources provided in multiple languages do not make sense to some communities, due to cultural differences.

Many clients are **concerned about children going to school** and being exposed to COVID-19. Parents also are concerned that home schooling will be required, as they do not feel they can adequately support their children.

Many clients are self-isolating, however, their **mental health is negatively affected**. Clients are frustrated and concerns about their families overseas. In addition, clients who are isolating are struggling to access food and basic necessities.