

SETSCoP

Communique: VIC COVID-19 and Best Practice Meeting

Videoconference – 24 January 2022

On 24 January 2022, the SETS Community of Practice (SETSCoP) held a videoconference for CoP members in Victoria to share their best practice and innovative service delivery, along with challenges faced through the recent outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Good News

Attendees discussed ongoing efforts **to improve vaccination uptake** in communities, including working with local medical professionals to deliver a vaccination hub and having volunteers attend appointments with clients and assist them to obtain vaccination certificates.

Some **events have had to be cancelled** due to restrictions or staff being affected by COVID-19. Service providers discussed ways that they have adapted their services. For example, one service filmed and photographed music and dance performances for Diversity Day and then held a 'red carpet' screening of the performances once restrictions had lifted, enabling the community to come together at the end of 2021.

Attendees reported that there appears to be an **increase in employment opportunities** for clients lately.

Challenges

Clients are increasingly wanting services delivered face-to-face. Some services are delivering services in a hybrid model, which creates additional work for each activity delivered. At the same time as some clients have wanted face-to-face services, there has been hesitancy to participate in face-to-face events due to high case numbers. This is particularly the case among youth.

Some clients, particularly younger ones, are **reluctant to get a booster shot**. This appears to be a result of changing information on the vaccines and changing eligibility requirements. Further, some organisations are unsure of the policy implications for service delivery and contact with clients if clients have not received their booster.

Providers reported that a key challenge clients are facing is **access to housing**. There is a lack of availability and, when it is available, housing is often unaffordable and does not always have accessible public transport options, making it not a realistic option for some clients.

Many **child care centres** now have a requirement for a negative result to be shown before children can return and clients are struggling to access RAT tests. Given high case numbers some service providers are reconsidering and in some cases cancelling the availability of child care running alongside programs for parents.

Many services have **lost volunteers** throughout the pandemic, either because they have not reengaged once face-to-face services have resumed or because they do not feel comfortable assisting in-person when case numbers remain high. This is particularly the case among older volunteers, who are hesitant to return, particularly to services where vaccination is not mandatory to enter the building. This is having an impact on the services that can be offered.

Attendees discussed **ongoing challenges organising in-person events**, as many of them have had to be cancelled at the last minute due to staff or clients being affected by COVID. This impacts on program spending and also means the outcomes for the work that has been undertaken cannot be achieved or reported on.

Many clients are **struggling to obtain their proof of vaccination**. The complex system, number of steps required and the challenges with clients accessing email make it nearly impossible for services to assist clients over the phone. In many areas, local libraries are assisting people to access their vaccination certificates. Some services are working in partnership with local neighbourhood houses to provide support.

Attendees discussed **multilingual government resources**. They reported that some of them are very simplistic and do not respond to the nuances and speed of changes occurring, meaning that settlement services feel unequipped to manage the situation. Some clients are still unaware of the restrictions for those who have tested positive and have considered going to pharmacies.

Some clients are **hesitant to get tested**, due to confusion around messaging, testing delays and lack of availability of testing. Further, some clients are unaware of the potential impact of being in the community when positive.

There is an ongoing need to get assistance from health professionals to continue to share information with community members regarding COVID-19 and vaccinations.

Shared Resources

Slides to explain how to support a client to access their myGov account and vaccination certificate can be found [here](#).