



NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission



# COVID-19 Information Pack for NDIS participants



Issue 1, June 2020



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## Introduction

This information pack contains information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic for NDIS participants, your families, carers and support workers.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) understands you may be anxious and worried at this time. You may find that you are able to get out less, you may not see your loved ones as much or you may need some extra help.

We are working with NDIS providers to make sure they understand what they need to do to continue to support you while keeping you and their staff safe.

This pack should answer all your questions and provide you with confidence that your care is being managed and supported in this difficult time.



### Role of the NDIS Commission

Our role is to promote the NDIS principles of choice and control and we work to empower participants to exercise their rights to access safe and high-quality NDIS supports and services.

During COVID-19, we have been providing information to registered NDIS providers to support them in understanding:

- their obligations to safely and competently provide supports and services to people with disability during the pandemic
- how to reduce exposure and transmission of COVID-19
- how to maintain NDIS supports and services.

We continue to oversee the NDIS Code of Conduct and NDIS Practice Standards, and respond to concerns, complaints and reportable incidents, including abuse and neglect of NDIS participants.

### Keeping you informed about COVID-19

This pack contains information and links to fact sheets, trusted sources such as government websites and provider information.

We have created a [dedicated NDIS participant webpage](#) with links to resources and updates about COVID-19.

We have written two COVID-19 fact sheets for NDIS participants:

- Our first [COVID-19 NDIS participant information fact sheet](#) explains your rights, how to make a complaint about a provider;

what resources are available from the NDIA; and where to find more information and resources about COVID-19.

It is also available in [Easy Read](#) and [Auslan](#) formats, and in [11 community languages](#).

- We have also written a fact sheet to explain [what you can expect from your providers and workers](#) during COVID-19. This includes some changes you might see in the way your supports and services are delivered during this time.

This fact sheet is also available in [Easy Read](#) and [Auslan](#) formats, and in [11 community languages](#).

### Staying Safe

It is important that you are safe. If you receive supports or services where there are a lot of people together, those services and supports may need to be, or already have been, changed. A lot of people in one place can increase the risk of you catching COVID-19.

It is also important you be careful in your decisions about who you see and where you go. This is to protect yourself and others who may be more likely to catch the virus.

If you are an NDIS participant, you can order a Braille copy of either fact sheet by emailing [engagement@ndiscommission.gov.au](mailto:engagement@ndiscommission.gov.au) with your name and address.

A copy will be posted to you through the 'Mail for the blind' postage service.



## Changes to services as a result of COVID-19

COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of all Australians. The priority of NDIS providers is to keep you and the workers who support you safe. But government advice, [state or territory's public health unit](#) advice, social distancing and self-isolation rules mean you may find there are some **unavoidable changes** to some of your NDIS supports and services.

It could mean that:

- a different worker may deliver your NDIS supports and services
- some supports and services may need to change or be temporarily postponed
- the provider may offer supports in a different way (for example, Skype)
- some places that you normally visit may be closed, like the movies
- if you normally receive some therapy or counselling face-to-face, then your provider may set up phone-based or interactive online services as an alternative
- if you usually undertake group recreational activities then your provider may set up activities that can be provided in your home, such as sing-alongs, cooking activities or craft

- instead of taking you to the supermarket to buy groceries, your support worker might do the shopping for you and deliver your shopping to you at home
- you could talk to your family and friends through telephone/video calls instead of face-to-face so you can keep in contact.

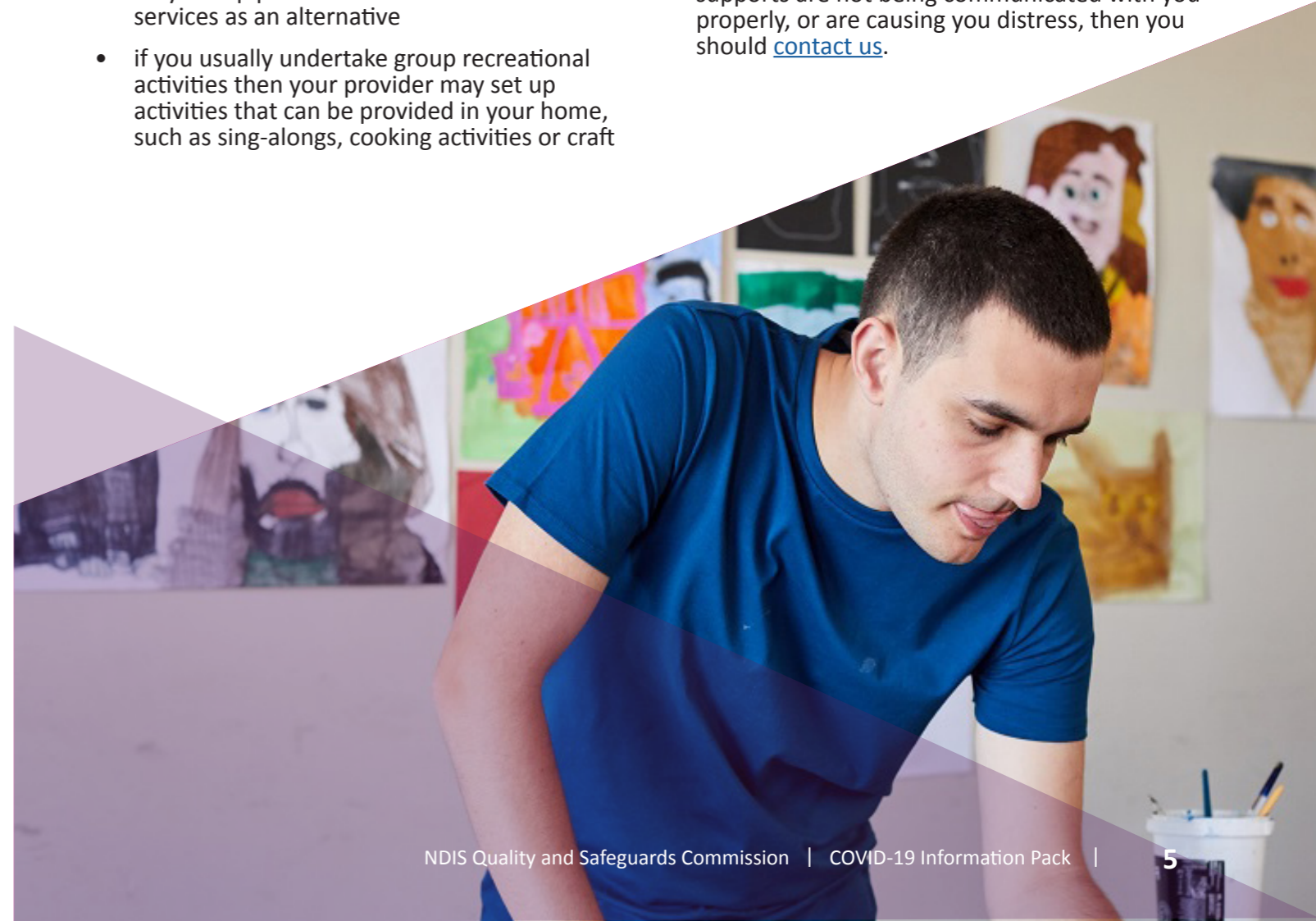
If there are any changes, then your provider should:

- seek your input regarding sudden changes to your activities
- provide you with the right information and seek your views about adjustments and changes.

### Any changes due to COVID-19

Providers are continuing to provide supports and services in a difficult situation, but registered providers are still **obligated to notify us** if they think there could be a significant impact on the supports and services you receive.

If you feel that the changes being made to your supports are not being communicated with you properly, or are causing you distress, then you should [contact us](#).



## Provider obligations

Our focus continues to be on the quality and safety of supports and services NDIS providers deliver to people with disability. Providers need to effectively respond to a crisis and continue to provide the supports and services you need to stay well and safe. Because of this, we have been working with them on their business continuity plans.

As part of those plans, they must:

- keep your records up to date, clear, accessible, and available should new or temporary staff be required to support you
- put clear communication channels in place to ensure staff, any third parties, as well as you and your support network receive the information you need at the right time and in the most appropriate way.

All NDIS providers, registered and unregistered, must continue to protect and prevent you from experiencing harm arising from poor quality or unsafe supports, abuse, neglect and exploitation, or poorly managed changes to supports.

## What you can expect from your providers

You should expect your providers to do their best to:

- keep you safe from unnecessary risk of catching the virus. This includes making sure workers know about washing their hands and meeting social distancing requirements
- let you know if there are any changes to your supports, for example not being able to go to your regular activities
- maintain those supports and services that you rely on for your health and safety.

We are giving NDIS providers information to support them in understanding what they need to do, and how to keep you safe when supporting you.

It is important that you stay connected with your providers. If you are in isolation, ask your providers how they can support you, by social distancing, or without face-to-face meetings.

## Your rights

We have a very clear [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) and [NDIS Practice Standards](#) that your providers and workers must abide by.

These standards also apply during COVID-19.



## Flu vaccinations

Australia is now heading into the influenza (flu) season, which is expected to overlap with the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Flu vaccinations are available now. The flu vaccination will help protect you from becoming seriously ill with flu, although it cannot protect you from getting sick from COVID-19.

If you want or need a flu vaccination, then you should arrange it now, or ask one of your providers to help you.

If you have questions about the flu vaccination speak with your doctor.

## Making a complaint about a provider

You have the right to complain if you are not happy with the services you receive from your provider.

If you feel unsafe or are unhappy with the quality of your NDIS supports and services – whether or not these issues relate to COVID-19 – you can speak to us about your concerns. It is always okay to speak up.

If you are in New South Wales, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria or Tasmania, you can make a complaint to us by:

- Calling: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677. Interpreters can be arranged.
- [National Relay Service](#) and ask for 1800 035 544.
- Completing a [complaint contact form](#).

If you are in Western Australia please continue to contact [HADSCO](#) to make a complaint until 30 November 2020.

## Frequently asked questions

### What is the NDIS Commission doing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic?

- We have created a dedicated [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information](#) webpage which contains links to updates, training, alerts and other resources.

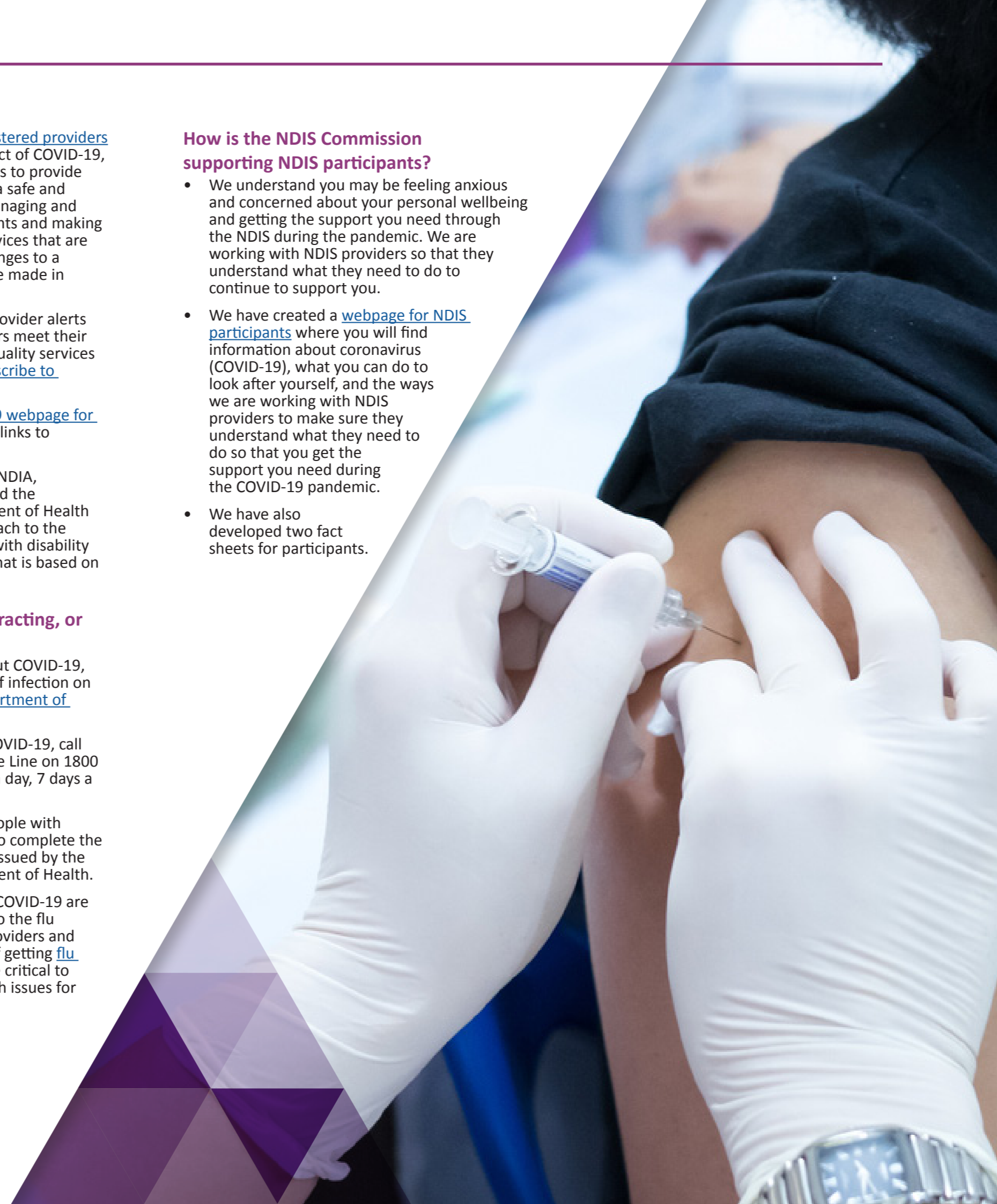
- We are also issuing [alerts to registered providers](#) with information about the impact of COVID-19, and reminders of their obligations to provide supports to NDIS participants in a safe and competent manner, including managing and mitigating risks to NDIS participants and making any changes to supports and services that are necessary to avoid risks. Any changes to a person's supports must always be made in consultation with them.
- Anyone wishing to receive our provider alerts with information to help providers meet their obligations to provide safe and quality services to people with disability [can subscribe to receive the provider updates](#).
- We have also created a [COVID-19 webpage for people with disability](#) containing links to information and resources.
- We are working closely with the NDIA, Department of Social Services and the Australian Government Department of Health so we all take a consistent approach to the information available to people with disability and support providers in a way that is based on the latest health information.

### How can I limit the risk of contracting, or spreading, COVID-19?

- Find up-to-date information about COVID-19, including ways to minimise risk of infection on the Australian Government [Department of Health website](#).
- If you need information about COVID-19, call the National Coronavirus Helpline Line on 1800 020 080. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Workers providing support to people with disability are being encouraged to complete the online [infection control training](#) issued by the Australian Government Department of Health.
- Although influenza (the flu) and COVID-19 are different, Australia is heading into the flu season, so we have reminded providers and participants of the importance of getting [flu vaccinations](#). Flu vaccinations are critical to reducing the risk of serious health issues for many people with disability.

### How is the NDIS Commission supporting NDIS participants?

- We understand you may be feeling anxious and concerned about your personal wellbeing and getting the support you need through the NDIS during the pandemic. We are working with NDIS providers so that they understand what they need to do to continue to support you.
- We have created a [webpage for NDIS participants](#) where you will find information about coronavirus (COVID-19), what you can do to look after yourself, and the ways we are working with NDIS providers to make sure they understand what they need to do so that you get the support you need during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We have also developed two fact sheets for participants.



## Useful links and resources

There is a lot of misinformation about COVID-19. Use trusted information sources only (such as Australian Government websites, the NDIA and the NDIS Commission).

We only provide links to trusted products, services and information sources. Do not get [tricked into a scam](#).



### Accessible resources - Easy read resources

The Australian Government has produced these Easy Read resources about COVID-19

- [Coronavirus - What is it?](#)
- [Coronavirus – 5 things to do right now](#)
- [Coronavirus – What you need to know](#)
- [Coronavirus – FAQs](#)
- [Coronavirus – Social distancing](#)
- [Coronavirus – Staying at home](#)
- [Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability](#)
- [Jobkeeper Payment impacts on Disability Support Pension recipients](#)
- [JobKeeper Payment impacts on Carer Payment recipient](#)

The Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) has produced these Easy Read resources:

- [Staying safe from coronavirus](#)
- [Look after your mental health during coronavirus](#)
- [Staying at home during coronavirus](#)

### Auslan resources

The Australian Government has produced Auslan resources about COVID-19:

- [Information for people with disability and carers](#)
- [Looking after yourself](#)
- [Support for your situation](#)
- [Helping others](#)
- [Who else can you talk to?](#)
- [Links to other accessible resources](#)

### Updates and advice: Australian Government

- **Australian Government COVID-19 updates:** Visit the [Australian Government website](#) for the latest news, updates and advice on COVID-19.
- **COVID-19 advice for people with disability:** The [Australian Government Department of Health](#) website has information about protecting yourself from COVID-19, managing your mental health, and getting access to important services like telehealth and prescription medications.
- **Coronavirus Australia app:** Download the official government ‘Coronavirus Australia’ app in the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play](#). Or join the Australian Government’s WhatsApp channel on [iOS](#) or [Android](#).
- **COVIDSafe app:** The [COVIDSafe app](#) speeds up contacting people exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19). This helps support and protect you, your friends and family. It can be downloaded in [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).
- **COVID-19 testing for people with disability:** The Department of Health has released a [fact sheet for support workers and carers](#) of people with disability. The fact sheet covers who should be tested, where testing can be done, and how to explain the testing process to a person with disability.
- **Department of Health updates:** The [Department of Health](#) website also has daily updates on COVID-19.
- **Department of Health Coronavirus FAQs:** The Department of Health has issued an [information sheet](#) that answers common questions about COVID-19.
- **Other languages:** The [Department of Home Affairs](#) has translated COVID-19 information into 36 languages.

### Participant resources from the NDIA

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has a [dedicated webpage for NDIS participants](#) about COVID-19. They have also developed a [series of animations](#) about how to get the funding and services you need during COVID-19.

The NDIA’s website includes Easy Read resources, frequently asked questions and up-to-date information about the NDIA’s response to COVID-19.

The NDIA recommends you discuss with your provider which supports and services you most need and make sure the provider has a plan in place to continue to support you.

If you have questions or require advice, please contact the NDIA’s Contact Centre on 1800 800 110.

### Disability Information Helpline

If you have a question about COVID-19, or need help because things have changed, you can contact the [Disability Information Helpline](#) on 1800 643 787. (If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can also call the National Relay Service on 133 677.)

The helpline is available Monday to Friday 8.00am to 8.00pm (AEST) and Saturday and Sunday 9.00am to 7.00pm (AEST). It is not available on national public holidays.

You can call the helpline if:

- your support worker has not turned up
- your provider has stopped services
- it is hard for you to get food, groceries, medications or other essential items
- someone close to you has symptoms of coronavirus
- you are feeling really upset
- anything else is worrying you.

### NDIS Commission contacts

**Call:** 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines). Our contact centre is open 9.00am to 4.30pm in the NT, 9.00am to 5.00pm in the ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, TAS and VIC Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

**Email:** [contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au](mailto:contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au)

**Website:** [www.ndiscommission.gov.au](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au)



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