



Government  
of South Australia

Department of Human Services

# COVID-19 Disability Response Management Plan

Version 1.1 – 21 July 2021

## Contents

### **1. Purpose**

### **2. Governance**

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

3.1. Commonwealth Department of Health

3.2. SA Health

3.3. Department of Human Services

3.4. Health and Wellbeing (the Office for Ageing Well)

3.5. NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

3.6. National Disability Insurance Agency

3.7. Department of Social Services

3.8. Disability service providers

### **4. Information and supports for disability service providers**

4.1. General information

4.2. Infection control

4.3. Personal Protective Equipment

### **5. Useful Links**

## 1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the governance arrangements and the roles and responsibilities that will apply to organisations supporting people with disability and the disability sector when responding to a COVID-19 outbreak.

It is a living document and will be updated regularly when new advice and materials are available as the preparations and response to COVID-19 develop.

This document complements specific national and state operational documents (see section 4).

## 2 Governance

The coordination of a response to an outbreak of COVID-19 within South Australia is instructed by the [Emergency Management Act 2004 \(SA\)](#).

Under this Act, the Police Commissioner is the State Coordinator and for the purposes of this human epidemic emergency (COVID-19 pandemic), SA Health has been declared the control agency. The Premier, Health Minister and State Coordinator take advice from the Chief Public Health Officer. Three deputy Chief Public Health Officers have also been appointed to assist the response.

The State Emergency Centre (SEC) is chaired by the State Coordinator and is a cross-agency body that provides central coordination support to the control agency – in the case of COVID-19, SA Health. Meetings will involve briefings from SA Health, problem solving, requests for collaboration and support, and general information sharing at a strategic level.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is not a standing member of SEC but has been invited to attend due to the human and community impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other human services focused agencies are also invited to attend (e.g. Department for Correctional Services) as required.

The State Recovery Office, now part of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, is a standing member of SEC and has a key role in supporting the planning required to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The State Command Centre is set up in a location determined by the control agency for the emergency. In the state's most recent response, this is the day-to-day workplace for SA Health where key activities are managed.

### 2.1 Non-government sector consultation

Three key sector groups were established in March 2020 in response to a COVID-19 outbreak and continued as needed to link non-government organisations (NGOs) to senior DHS staff, including the Chief Executive, who can escalate concerns and rapidly seek cross-government advice. These groups will be re-established for future outbreaks.

#### COVID-19 NGO Sector Intelligence Group

The group was established in March 2020 as a mechanism for DHS to engage with the sector to not only provide information, but for the sector to raise issues and concerns directly with government for quick resolution and advice. During an outbreak, the group generally meets bi-weekly and moves to fortnightly as issues settle. The group is chaired by the Chief Executive, DHS and comprises senior executives from a broad cross-section of human services' providers, including: SACOSS, Women's Safety Service SA, United Communities, Anglicare and St Vincent de Paul.

#### NGO Peaks Group

The group was established in March 2020 to enable DHS to provide timely updates directly to the heads of various peak bodies representing the community and disability services sectors. During an outbreak, the group generally meets bi-weekly and moves to fortnightly as issues settle. The group is chaired by the Chief Executive, DHS, and membership includes leaders of NGO organisations such as Community Centres SA, Volunteering SA-NT, the National Disability Services (SA) and Centacare.

#### Supported Independent Living Reference Group

The group was established to specifically assist disability accommodation providers and is chaired by the Executive Director, Disability Services. During an outbreak, the group focuses on COVID updates with the frequency of meetings coinciding with the Sector Intelligence Group to ensure consistent messaging.

Extensive communications with the NGO sector via various other means are also managed by individual business units and the DHS COVID-19 Response Team.

This governance arrangement will operate during a COVID-19 outbreak in South Australia to ensure people with disability and service providers are informed and supported.

### **3 Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **3.1 Commonwealth Department of Health**

The Commonwealth Department of Health (DoH) is responsible for leading the Commonwealth Government's response to a COVID-19 outbreak.

The Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) appointed the Deputy Secretary Disability and Carers as the COVID-19 Disability lead.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) is the key decision-making committee for health emergencies. It is comprised of all state and territory Chief Health Officers and is chaired by the Australian Chief Medical Officer.

To assist consistency across jurisdictions when supporting people with disability during a COVID-19 outbreak, DoH has produced the [Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability \(health.gov.au\)](#), which supports the objectives of the Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for COVID-19.

The Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) developed the [CDNA national guidelines for the prevention and management of COVID-19 outbreaks in disability residential services - The Disability Supplement](#).

Plans and guidelines from these Commonwealth authorities inform SA Health's response to a COVID-19 outbreak.

## 3.2 SA Health

SA Health, as the declared control agency, is responsible for leading the response to an outbreak of COVID-19 in South Australia. It will do this in line with any plans or guidelines set by the Commonwealth Government, and in accordance with directions set by the State Coordinator.

In relation to supporting people with disability during a COVID-19 outbreak, SA Health will be responsible for providing critical information to support a coordinated health response between:

- service providers
- the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS).

SA Health is also responsible for [tracking and tracing](#).

## 3.3 Department of Human Services (DHS)

DHS is responsible for coordinating and disseminating critical information regarding South Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to the disability sector so that it can be easily operationalised by service providers. DHS undertakes this role in consultation with SA Health, SA Police and other key disability stakeholders.

In the event of a declared COVID-19 outbreak, the DHS Incident Management Team (IMT), SA Disability Emergency Management group, COVID-19 Disability Management Team, COVID-19 NGO Sector Intelligence Group, NGO Peaks Group, the SIL Reference Group and dedicated COVID-19 Response Team are activated.

### 3.3.1 DHS Incident Management Team (IMT)

The **IMT** meets daily at the height of the pandemic (scaled up and down as required) and is chaired by the Chief Executive or delegate. Membership comprises:

- the Executive Leadership Team (ELT)
- Minister for Human Services' Chief of Staff
- Head of the COVID-19 Response Team
- Director, Communications and Engagement
- Manager, Corporate Communications

- any other members as determined by the Chair

### 3.3.2 SA Disability Emergency Management group

The **SA Disability Emergency Management** group meet daily (scaling down as appropriate) for a short meeting to identify any issues, directions and/or arrangements that need to be coordinated across governments and government agencies during a COVID-19 lockdown. Information from this meeting is used to inform the SIL Reference Group COVID Update meeting. Membership comprises:

- DHS Executive Director, Disability Services (Chair)
- DHS Director, Access and Inclusion
- DHS Communications and Engagement
- DHS COVID-19 Response team
- NDIA
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- DSS
- SA Department of Health and Wellbeing
- SA Deputy Chief Health Officer

### 3.3.3 SIL Reference Group

To assist Supported Independent Living (SIL) providers, DHS will be responsible for coordinating the **SIL Reference Group (COVID Updates)** meeting. DHS will ensure that during a COVID-19 outbreak this group will:

- convene daily on business days (scaling down as appropriate) and will communicate outcomes from the meetings to the Group.
- ensure real time responses to the impacts of higher-level restrictions on people with disability and SIL providers.
- coordinate operational information for this cohort of service providers.
- ensure this meeting informs the SA Disability Emergency Management group, and that information from the SA Disability Emergency Management group informs this group.

### 3.3.4 COVID-19 Response Team

The **COVID-19 Response Team** supports business units and the non-government sector with COVID-19 related information and communications including managing general COVID-19 queries and requests for assistance. In undertaking this role, the COVID-19 Response Team will work closely with SA Health and SAPOL to ensure timely and correct information is provided to relevant DHS staff and the disability sector. Specifically, the COVID-19 Response Team will be responsible for:

- coordinating all communications for the disability sector

- managing issues as they arise
- providing general support for the non-government sectors connected to DHS
- establishing a chain of key internal and external contacts across the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments and the non-government disability sector.

### 3.4 Health and Wellbeing (the Office for Ageing Well)

The Office for Ageing Well (OFAW) will share information and collaborate with DHS to ensure the response to support people with disability complements and leverages from the response to support older persons during a COVID-19 outbreak.

Information sharing and collaboration will primarily take place through the **Congregate Living Working Group**, which is chaired and coordinated by OFAW, and the SA Disability Emergency Management Meeting chaired and coordinated by DHS. This group covers Residential Aged Care facilities, disability group homes, and supported residential facilities. It provides an opportunity for representatives from Aged Care, Mental Health, Disability, Public Health and Unions to raise issues about supporting people with disability who reside in congregate living settings during a COVID-19 outbreak. Membership comprises:

- Director, Office for Ageing Well, SA Health (Chair)
- Deputy Chief Public Health Officer, SA Health
- COVID-19 Acute Operational Committee, SA Health
- Executive Director, Nursing and Midwifery, Yorke and Northern LHN
- Director, Mental Health Policy, Planning & Safety, Office of the Chief Psychiatrist, SA Health
- Kathleen Korossy, Project Manager NDIS, Wellbeing SA
- Executive Director, Disability Services, Department for Human Services
- State Manager SA/NT, Leading Age Services Australia
- Senior Manager, Strategic Policy, Aged and Community Services Australia
- Chief Executive Officer, Aged Care Industry Association
- State Manager, National Disability Services
- United Workers Union
- Australian and Nursing Midwifery Federation
- Other representatives as invited on either an ad hoc or ongoing basis

### 3.5 NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (the Commission) is responsible for responding to:

- notifications from NDIS service providers regarding suspected COVID-19 cases
- notifications from NDIS service providers regarding confirmed COVID-19 cases

- or issues relating to decreased capacity to deliver services to people with disability due to a COVID-19 outbreak.

Once notified, the Commission will immediately contact the service provider and will follow up on day 3 and day 10. The Commission will also triage the notifications/information and provide this information to the NDIA. The NDIA will then work with the service provider to ensure appropriate funding is available in NDIS participants' plans so the provider has appropriate funding to support the ongoing delivery of services to NDIS participants.

The Commission will record all infections on a tracking spreadsheet and shares this information with the NDIA and the relevant state authorities.

The Commission attends the SA Emergency Management Meetings chaired and coordinated by DHS.

### **3.6 National Disability Insurance Agency**

During an outbreak, the NDIA will closely monitor the situation in South Australia and will follow the lead of SA Health as the control agency.

The NDIA provides support to NDIS participants and providers and communicates about any changes that may affect the delivery of NDIS supports throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

The NDIA regularly updates temporary support measures for participants and providers in response to changing circumstances. Details of these measures are published on the NDIS website.

The NDIA attends the SA Emergency Management Meetings chaired and coordinated by DHS.

### **3.7 Department of Social Services**

The Department of Social Services (DSS) will support individuals and families affected by coronavirus through a range of measures, including:

- extension of income support
- Coronavirus supplement
- adjusted income free area and taper rate
- reduction in partner income test taper rate
- expanding eligibility and qualification for payments
- gradual return of mutual obligation requirements
- economic support payments
- emergency assistance and support
- crisis payments.



DSS attends the SA Emergency Management Meetings chaired and coordinated by DHS.

### 3.8 Disability service providers

Disability service providers are represented at the SIL Reference Group (chaired and coordinated by DHS) and the Congregate Living Working Group (chaired and coordinated by OFAW), where experiences are shared to support a quick and effective state-wide response to issues that arise.

Disability service providers are responsible for delivering relevant **training** to their staff. The Commonwealth Government and SA Health have made available online training for disability settings, including:

- [The SA Health Training Tool for the Correct Use of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) for Residential Aged Care Facilities \(PDF 232KB\)](#)
- [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Education and Training PowerPoint \(PDF 1MB\)](#)
- [National Principles: Clinical Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [COVID-19 infection control training](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) wearing personal protective equipment in aged care video](#)

Disability service providers are also responsible for ensuring they have a **business continuity plan** in place. To assist service providers, the Department of Human Services has developed a [DHS NGO COVID-19 Support Toolkit](#)

## 4 Information and supports for disability service providers

### 4.1 General information

Service providers should regularly check for new information and updates on the following websites:

- [SA Health COVID-19 health information](#)
- [COVID-19 NGO Support website](#)

The Commonwealth and South Australian Governments have prepared operational materials to support disability service providers to prepare for, and manage an outbreak of, COVID-19.

The Commonwealth Government has provided the following information to assist people with disability, their carers, families and guardians and the sector:

- [Information and referrals for people with disability and their supporters about coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for people with disability](#)
- [Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability](#)

**SA Health** has produced the following guidance for the community care sectors:

- [People with disability](#)
- [Aged, disability and residential care](#)

There are two guidelines prepared for the aged care sector than can be used to inform response planning within the disability sector:

- the [COVID-19 Strategy for Residential Aged Care Facilities](#)
- the [Integrated Response Framework for the Management of Multiple Outbreaks in Residential Aged Care Facilities in South Australia](#).

SA Health has also produced a guideline and checklist for Supported Residential Facilities (SRFs):

- [Guideline for management in supported residential facilities in South Australia](#)
- Management [in Supported Residential Facilities Checklist](#)

DHS has produced the [South Australian COVID-19 Supported Independent Living Operational Response Plan](#) that offers a broad overview for Supported Independent Living service providers on processes to follow, access to necessary pathways, information and resources for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases.

## 4.2 Infection control

DoH and SA Health have prepared guidelines and plans to assist organisations practice good infection control.

Organisations can obtain relevant information from the [SA Health page on infection control and personal protective equipment \(PPE\) advice](#).

There is also the [Residential Aged Care Facilities COVID Infection Control Plan Template](#) and the [Residential Aged Care Facility COVID-19 Infection Control Plan Guidance](#), which can be referred to and modified to suit business needs.

## 4.3 Personal Protective Equipment

Disability service providers should be following SA Health and the [Commonwealth Department of Health](#) guidelines and plans to assist in using and accessing PPE. PPE can be accessed from the national stockpile, [from SA Health](#), through the NDIA where appropriate, or via private means.

Where relevant, the NDIA may provide funding for PPE during periods of high community transmission and hotspots.

## 5 Useful Links

### 5.1 SA Government

- [State Government COVID-19 Information Hub](#)
- [State Government Emergency Declarations/Directions](#)
- [Information about and Application Forms for the Authorising Officer \(for the purposes of detention\)](#)
- [SA Health Contact Tracing/Locations](#)
- [SA Health Testing information](#)
  - [SA Health Testing locations](#)
  - [SA Health COVID-19 information](#)
  - [DHS NGO Support website](#)
  - [SA Health COVID-19 Aged Care page](#)

### 5.2 Commonwealth Government

- [Government response to the COVID-19 outbreak](#)
- [Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19 advice for the health and disability sector\)](#)
- [Advice for people at risk of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Advice on aged care during COVID-19](#)
- [Translated resources](#)