

4.1.5 COVID-19 Response Policy and Procedure

4.1.5.1 Purpose

As a NDIS service provider, Nepean Centre will fulfil our obligations to deliver safe, quality supports and services while also managing risks associated with the supports, we provide to our participants.

Our COVID-19 Response Policy and Procedure align with the Australian Federal Government and NDIS guidelines regarding outbreak preparedness, prevention and management of COVID-19 within Nepean Centre. This policy aims to avoid or minimise the transmission of COVID-19 within our organisation and the community.

Throughout the pandemic, Nepean Centre will endeavour to maintain full-service capacity and continue providing support critical to our participants' well-being, health and safety while complying with state and federal regulatory requirements. Due to COVID-19, we may have to tailor our services or apply limitations to the provision of our non-essential services.

We are focused on preserving the health and safety of the people we are responsible for, including our participants, employees, and their families/carers. However, we acknowledge that at some point, a participant or employee may contract COVID-19.

4.1.5.2 Scope

This policy intends to guide our employees on taking reasonable precautions to protect themselves and participants from contracting COVID-19. The policy outlines preparations for an outbreak of COVID-19 and response and management of confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19.

4.1.5.3 Description

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more severe diseases. This new coronavirus is named COVID-19.

COVID-19 is transmitted from person-to-person, usually when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Common signs of novel coronavirus are:

- fever
- coughing
- sore throat
- fatigue
- loss of smell and taste
- shortness of breath.

It is important to note, to raise awareness and not spread fear, that while COVID-19 exhibits symptoms like the flu, it is not as simple as contracting seasonal flu. Most people have immunity to the flu, there is a vaccine, and the flu spreads more slowly through the community. Vaccines against COVID-19 are available but still highly unpredictable, with conditions changing daily nationally and globally.

4.1.5.4 Definitions

Term	Definition
Close contact	More than 15 minutes of face-to-face contact in any setting with a confirmed (or probable) case in the period from 24 hours before the onset of symptoms in the confirmed (or probable) case. Sharing a closed space with a confirmed (or probable) case for a prolonged period (more than two hours) in the period extending from 24 hours before the onset of symptoms in the confirmed (probable) case.
Outbreak	The Australian Government Department of Health considers an outbreak when two people in three days become sick with symptoms, and at least one of these three has a positive COVID-19 test.

4.1.5.5 Policy

Nepean Centre will implement our COVID-19 Response Policy and Procedure to ensure all participants, staff members and external contractors are supported if a COVID-19 case is identified within, or connected to, our organisation.

State government health orders frequently change in response to COVID-19 outbreaks. On an ongoing basis, our organisation will identify and implement any revisions required to the practices and supports undertaken by our business to meet all requirements of the NDIS Commission and the state and federal government.

Nepean Centre will identify threats that may require further analysis of our current work practices and supports. Reviewing current practices will inform our organisational risk management and continuous improvement systems.

As a registered NDIS provider, our organisation will notify the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commissioner of specific changes and events. The notification is primarily when our organisation may have difficulty providing supports and services as per Section 13 and 13A of the [NDIS \(Provider Registration and Practice Standards\) Rules 2018](#) using [Notification of Event for – COVID 19](#) or phoning 1800 035 544.

Our organisation will notify the NDIS Commission

- if a support worker or NDIS participant is confirmed to have COVID-19
- if there are changes to the scale of their operations
- any other changes related to COVID-19.

Staff are encouraged to seek the relevant vaccination to protect themselves and our participants. We will record their vaccination in our staff records.

4.1.5.6 Procedure

4.1.5.6.1 Preparing for an outbreak

As community transmission of COVID-19 occurs within Australia, our organisation will plan and prepare for possible cases involving our participants or employees.

A COVID-19 Safe Plan and COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan will be developed to identify risks to participants, employees, and our organisation. Nepean Centre will review current work practices, services offered, and employee functions and implement relevant changes (as and when required) to ensure our organisation is appropriately prepared for a COVID-19 outbreak.

The Outbreak Management Plan will assist Nepean Centre to help our employees identify, respond, and manage a potential outbreak. It also assists in protecting the health of our employees and participants and reducing the severity of the duration of outbreaks if they occur.

The COVID-19 Safe Plan and the Outbreak Management Plan are reviewed regularly by management. Oversight of the plans is the responsibility of the General Manager.

4.1.5.6.2 Precautions relating to staff

4.1.5.6.2.1 Signs of symptoms and COVID-19 testing

All Nepean Centre staff will take reasonable precautions so that we can safely provide supports and services. Our staff have been instructed to immediately contact the General Manager and not attend work if they have:

- symptoms of a respiratory illness (even mild symptoms), including a fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose or congested nose, tiredness, loss of smell or appetite
- returned from overseas or interstate within the last 14 days, consistent with the state's public health directions
- been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

If a staff experiences any of the above symptoms while at work, they must:

- leave work immediately
- report symptoms to the General Manager
- get tested for COVID-19
- self-isolate at home until test results are received.

If the COVID-19 test is negative, the worker may return to work once they are well.

If the test is positive, the state public health unit will contact the worker and inform them what they must do. Public health officials will undertake a close-contact investigation to advise self-quarantine and testing for other workers or participants.

If a Nepean Centre participant or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, our organisation will follow all appropriate and current government procedures. We will instruct all staff members who have been in contact or have been in the same area as the participant or staff member with COVID-19 to seek appropriate medical advice, be tested for COVID-19, and self-isolate for 14 days.

Nepean Centre will advise all appropriate personnel to work from home for 14 days in the following instances:

- Nepean Centre staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

- A confirmed case of COVID-19 has been identified in a participant or staff member.
- A confirmed case of COVID-19 has been identified in the local area of Nepean Centre's head office location or a caring environment (including a participant's home).

A staff member will also be asked to work from home for 14 days if a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been identified in the staff member's home, suburb or local area as a precaution.

Nepean Centre will ensure that all staff members can continue working remotely, if necessary.

4.1.5.6.3 Staff training

Employees will be instructed to complete the [Australian Department of Health's online COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#). The General Manager records training details in the Staff Training Record filed in the employee's personnel file and the Training Register.

During staff meetings, employees will be trained in using PPE correctly and provided an update on infection control procedures (including standard and transmission-based precautions content).

4.1.5.6.4 Personal protective equipment (PPE)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we will stay updated with the latest advice from our state's public health unit regarding when and where to use PPE while supporting participants to remain compliant with government orders.

All existing and new employees will be shown by the General Manager how to wear PPE correctly.

When purchasing PPE, the General Manager or their delegate will consult the Australian Department of Industry, Science and Energy and Resources Personal Protective Equipment Buyers Guide to determine how to purchase appropriate PPE.

When unable to access necessary PPE supplies, the General Manager will request assistance by emailing the National Medical Stockpile at NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au. Our organisation will supply PPE to staff and may record current stock levels in the Staff Personal Protective Equipment PPE Provision form.

4.1.5.6.5 Responding to a participant with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19

Nepean Centre employees are instructed to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 in participants or their families. If a participant or family member shows symptoms, the Outbreak Management Plan will be implemented by the General Manager immediately.

Support to the participant who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 may still be provided. However, our employees must correctly wear appropriate PPE per state government orders. The General Manager will seek instruction from the department of health before commencing any support with a participant suspected or confirmed of having COVID-19.

When responding to a participant with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, the support our workers will offer may include the following:

- assisting the participant in seeking medical advice if they have symptoms
- identifying essential supports for the maintenance of the participant's health, well-being and safety and determining if they can be delivered differently
- ensuring good communication with the participant and their family, so everyone understands disruptions and changes to supports
- always wearing appropriate PPE as per the state's public health guidelines.

Nepean Centre workers will not enter the home of an unwell participant unless correctly wearing appropriate PPE to provide support to maintain the participant's health, well-being, health or safety. An unwell participant will not be able to enter our premises until their COVID-19 status is confirmed.

For participants, their families, and carers who require information, we will guide them to the Disability Gateway helpline, which is free, private and fact-checked. Below are the ways to contact the Disability Gateway

- Phone (free call): 1800 643 787
- If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, call the National Relay Service at 133 677.

The Disability Gateway is available Monday to Friday from 8 am to 8 pm (AEST) and is unavailable on national public holidays.

4.1.5.6.6 Visitor management



Nepean Centre will regularly review our COVID-19 Workplace Attendance Register or COVID-19 Check-In App to determine if there have been suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within our workplace.

In a confirmed or suspected case within our workplace, we seek guidance from public health officials to assist with confirmed or suspected outbreaks.

Our employees, participants and families/carers will be informed by the General Manager of the steps we will be taking to prevent infection, including visitor management practices.

Nepean Centre will manage visitors to our organisation using the following practices:
Inform all visitors regarding social distancing and hand hygiene.

Ask all visitors to check into our workplace by completing the Workplace Attendance Register or using a Check-In App. The information they must provide includes the following:

- first name
- phone number
- date and time entered and exited our workplace.

Nepean Centre will provide a hand sanitiser at the entry/reception area of the workplace.

4.1.5.6.7 Good respiratory and hand hygiene

Nepean Centre will ensure that standard infection control precautions are practised throughout all work environments (see Infection Control Management Policy and Procedure).

There are preventative measures staff can take to protect themselves from infection and help prevent infections and viruses from others. These measures include practising good respiratory and hand hygiene, such as:

- cleaning hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs or sanitisers
- avoiding touching your face
- avoiding handshaking and other physical greetings
- covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing
- avoiding contact with anyone who has symptoms such as fever, a cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath
- staying home if you are unwell
- wearing appropriate PPE when caring for participants
- regularly clean shared high-touch surfaces, e.g. tables, benches, and doorknobs.

4.1.5.6.8 Social distancing in the workplace

Social distancing is critical as COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person to person. The following actions taken by our staff will help reduce risk in our work environment:

- staying at home if they are sick
- stop handshaking and other physical greetings
- all meetings are to be held via video conferencing or phone call
- deferring large face-to-face meetings
- holding essential meetings outside in the open air if possible
- eat lunch outside, rather than in the office if possible
- professional cleaners will regularly clean the office
- clean and disinfect shared high-touch surfaces regularly and use hand sanitiser
- open windows and adjust the air conditioning to allow for more fresh air.

4.1.5.7 Managing an outbreak

The state public health unit may declare (or assist you in deciding whether to declare) an outbreak. The public health department will guide Nepean Centre on managing the outbreak.

If an outbreak is suspected or confirmed in our workplace, the General Manager will:

- confirm standard infection control precautions are in place
- commence transmission-based precautions (if not already in place)
- convene the Outbreak Management Team
- implement Outbreak Management Plan
- isolate suspected or confirmed cases and, if necessary, assign a dedicated support worker to them
- liaise with the public health department and follow their instructions
- schedule regular environmental cleaning and disinfection of all areas

- put up signage at the entrance or workplace to inform visitors
- suspend all non-essential services and supports
- suspend all non-essential visitors to the workplace.

4.1.5.8 Vaccination

All vaccinations are voluntary, and participants must be allowed to provide informed consent for any medical treatments or procedures, including the COVID-19 vaccine. Our organisation will collaborate with and assist the Australian Department of Health contracted COVID-19 vaccination providers by providing relevant healthcare information or behaviour support plans and rostering support staff to enable the safe administration of the vaccine.

Nepean Centre will communicate regularly with participants about the COVID-19 vaccination. Informing participants about the purpose of the COVID-19 vaccination and, where appropriate, it will be useful to have a person that a participant is most familiar with or trusts (such as a family member/guardian, a participant's friend or a particular staff member) to be involved in informing the participant.

Our organisation will:

- construct strategies to assist participants who are averse to injections and pain
 - bring comfort items
 - play favourite music
 - iPad
 - rehearse in advance
 - book support person for the visit
- use anxiety-reducing strategies by seeking advice from:
 - family member
 - guardian
 - local general practitioner
 - NDIS behaviour support practitioner
 - Trusted staff members
- Seek advice from a medical practitioner if there is an allergic reaction history or pain to identify risks and benefits
- Explain side effects

Staff will work with participants before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and assist vaccination providers in administering the vaccination as appropriate.

During the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine, if a regulated restrictive practice is used that is not in a participant's behaviour support plan and/or does not have current authorisation from the state or territory, it is a reportable incident to the NDIS Commission.

4.1.5.8.1 COVID-19 Safe Plan

Our COVID-19 Safe Plan sets out the following:

- Actions to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace.
- Workplace requirements - the level of face-covering or personal protective equipment (PPE)
- The procedure on how we will prepare for and respond to a suspected or confirmed coronavirus case (COVID-19) in our workplace.
- Details of how Nepean Centre will meet all the requirements set out by the state government (some higher-risk industries or workplaces have additional requirements for employers and employees).

A COVID-19 Workplace Attendance Register is maintained (see visitor management).

The General Manager will ensure our COVID-19 Safe Plan meets the state government's orders and action requirements at all times.

4.1.5.9 Related documents

- Staff Personal Protective Equipment PPE Provision
- Training Register
- Staff Training Record
- Risk Management Plan Register
- Risk Assessment Form

- COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan
- COVID-19 Safe Plan
- COVID-19 Workplace Attendance Register
- [Notification of Event form – COVID 19](#)
- Infection Management Policy and Procedure
- Emergency and Disaster Management Policy and Procedure
- Business Continuity Policy and Procedure
- Risk Management Policy and Procedure
- Work Health Safety and Environmental Management Policy and Procedure

4.1.5.10 References

- NDIS Practice Standards and Indicators 2020
- NDIS Code of Conduct
- Australian Department of Industry, Science and Energy and Resources - Personal Protective Equipment Buyers Guide
- Australian Government Department of Health Video - Coronavirus: Wearing personal protective equipment for disability workers.
- Australian Government Department of Health's website
 - <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>
 - <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-social-distancing.pdf>
- [NDIS Coronavirus information and support webpage:](#)