



# **COVID-19 Policy and Response Plan**

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# COVID-19 Policy

## PURPOSE

This Policy & Response Plan is in line with the Australian Federal Government National Guidelines regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, as it is necessary to minimise transmission of COVID-19 within the community and to reduce further stress on public hospitals and general practitioner (GP) surgeries and clinics.

M&M Support Solutions will maintain a service that will continue to serve our participants. However, our priority is to focus on preserving the health and safety of the people we are responsible for including staff, their families and our clients.

The development of this policy is not because we are fearful of contracting COVID-19, but rather to ensure our organisation is well prepared to engage in the national response to COVID-19.

## DESCRIPTION

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

COVID-19 is transmitted from person-to-person, usually when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Although information is changing daily, the common signs of novel coronavirus are:

- fever
- coughing
- sore throat
- fatigue
- shortness of breath.

It's important to note, to raise awareness and not spread fear, that while COVID-19 exhibits symptoms similar to the flu, it is not as simple as contracting a seasonal flu. Most people have immunity to the flu, there is a vaccine, and the flu spreads more slowly through the community.

There is a vaccine against COVID-19, and it is mandated by the Tasmanian Government Health Department and the Quality Safeguard Commission that all Disability workers are vaccinated by the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021.

A booster has also now been developed and recommended at 5 months after the second vaccination.

It is hoped that all employees of M&M Support Solutions will take up the offer of the booster when eligible, however it is not yet mandated.

## **RESPONSE PLAN**

M&M Support Solutions will implement our COVID-19 Response Plan to ensure all staff members and external contractors are supported if a COVID-19 case is identified within or connected to our organisation.

M&M Support Solutions will advise all personnel to work from home for 14 days in the following instances:

- A M&M Support Solutions staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- A confirmed case of COVID-19 has been identified within our work environment.

If a staff member is displaying any one or more of the listed common signs of COVID-19 they are expected to stay home and get a Covid test. If the Covid test is negative, they will be expected to stay home until all symptoms have cleared before returning to work. M&M Support Solutions will endeavour to support all staff members to continue their work from home – if possible. It is the responsibility of a staff member displaying any one or more of the listed common signs of COVID-19, to notify M&M Support Solutions Management prior to commencing any support work.

In the event a M&M Support Solutions staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, we will follow all appropriate and current government procedures. We will instruct all staff members who have been in contact and/or have been in the same area as the staff member with COVID-19 to seek appropriate medical advice, to be tested for COVID-19, and to self-isolate for 14 days. M&M Support Solutions will support the staff member as much as possible during this time.

Should any M&M Support Solutions staff member arrive at a participant's home and the participant is displaying any one or more of the listed common signs of COVID-19, the staff member must leave immediately and notify management to enable a Continuity of Support

Plan for that participant. A negative COVID 19 test result will be required before any further 'face-to-face' supports can be provided. **No contact with or face-to-face supports are to be given to any participant who displays any sign of illness.**

To assure all staff are complying to the NDIS-QSC standards and our own policy's the key points are as follows:

### **All M&M Support Solutions Team Members**

- All M&M Support Solutions employees must assure they follow all process outlined in M&M Support Solutions COVID 19 policy.
- **Delivery of Supports** – Where possible minimise any direct 'face-to-face' contact with participants/ plan nominees if a phone call, email or digital platform can be used.
- **At the arrival** of a scheduled appointment, meeting and or support work occasion if the participant or someone in the participant's home is unwell (headache, sore throat cold and or flu like symptoms- do not enter the home until this is clarified). Should the answer be yes, then cancel the supports immediately and advise management to enable a Continuity of Support Plan to be developed.
- The service/meeting will be rescheduled following the all clear from a negative covid test and when the participant has fully recovered, showing no symptoms of cold or flu like symptoms.
- Should the incidence of COVID 19 infections increase in our community, mask wearing will become mandatory for M&M Support Solutions employees. (see appendix 1 below).

### **Cancellations**

If a participant/parent/guardian notifies our office that someone is unwell – prior to a service taking place - the following payment situation will apply:

- No cancellation fees will apply if we are given at least 24 hours.
- If staff members arrive and then leave due to someone in the home having cold/flu like symptoms or are generally unwell then M&M Support Solutions will then still charge the occasion as normal and the staff member will be paid for their time.
- M&M Support Solutions would advise and support our participants if they have a cold or flu like symptoms to call 1800 671 738 (Tasmania Public Health Hotline) .

### **Working with Unvaccinated Participants**

- M&M Support Solutions will ask all participants (that are eligible for the vaccination) their vaccination status and note this in the participant information, on the running time sheet.
- M&M Support Solutions will advise unvaccinated participants, that are eligible for the vaccination, that M&M Support Solutions preferred option will be to provide ongoing support via media platforms such as teams meeting and Skype and or with as per our COVID policy take all steps to minimise risk as much as possible, including in some cases PPE and wearing of a face mask.
- M&M Support Solutions will also advise the participant that we can assist them to be vaccinated by supporting them to secure and attend a vaccination clinic if they like, being mindful it is the participants choice

## **PREVENTION**

### **Good respiratory and hand hygiene**

There are preventative measures staff can take to protect themselves from infection and help prevent the spread of infections and viruses to 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**
- Regularly clean shared high-touch surfaces, e.g. tables, benches, doorknobs
- As a standard precaution, stay at least 1.5 metres away from other people coughing or
- Sneezing with flu-like symptoms.

## **Social distancing in the workplace**

Social distancing is critical as COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person-to-person. The following actions help reduce risk at work:

- Stay at home if you are sick and advise Management to cancel any scheduled work.
- Consider if an alternative delivery of service other than face-to-face can be used, e.g. emails, phone call or other digital platforms.
- Consider if gatherings can be rescheduled, staggered or cancelled.
- Stop handshaking and other physical greetings.
- Hold meetings via phone or video conferencing.
- Reconsider non-essential business travel.
- Defer large face-to-face meetings.
- Hold essential meetings outside in the open air if possible.
- Eat lunch outside rather than in the office.
- Clean and disinfect shared high-touch surfaces regularly and use hand sanitiser.
- Consider opening windows and adjusting air conditioning for more fresh air.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-social-distancing.pdf>
- <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

## **REFERENCES**

- <https://www.australia.gov.au/>
- Quality Safeguard Commission
- Tasmanian Department of Health

### **Appendix 1 – Mandatory Mask Wearing**

As of 12.01am Tuesday 21st December 2021 masks must be worn in all public indoor settings till further notice. This will include in all businesses and shops, all service providers and

community venues and when using public transport. This will affect our support delivery processes.

If working with a participant exempt from wearing a mask – the exemption must be carried by the M&M Support Solutions employee, should it be asked for.

All other participants will need a mask. It will be the responsibility of the participant to purchase their own mask to wear. Please discuss this with the participant and if needed, support them to make the purchase. If any participant has financial difficulties in making this purchase, please let me know so that we can assist where needed.

As of tomorrow, here are some things that we will need to be doing to ensure the safety of our participants, ourselves and our families:

1. Before entering a participant's home - put on a mask and sanitise hands. It is preferred that you keep the mask on while in the participant's home for the entire shift. We don't know who else has been in the house or where the participant has been previously.
2. On arrival to the start of each shift be aware of the participant's health. Some of our guys will not tell us if they are feeling unwell, so be observant. Is the participant looking unwell? Are there signs of fever, runny nose, a cough or a sore throat?
3. If they are unwell, please let the participant know that you will need to cancel the shift. Go back to your car and give me a call. We will then discuss the next steps in ensuring how we can best support the participant e.g. a call to the Public Health Hotline 1800 671 738 or their GP.
3. If the participant is well and you are heading out in the car, masks must be worn in the car by both you and the participant. The participant should also be encouraged to use hand sanitiser.
4. While out and about be vigilant and follow all Covid safe measures.
5. At the end of the shift, dispose of your face mask. A new mask should be worn when starting with a different participant.

It is very important that we all follow this process so that the participants are seeing Continuity of Supports no matter who the support worker is. It will be our role to prompt and remind our participants to follow all of the Covid safe measures when needed.