



Li-Ve Tasmania COVID-19 Policy, Procedures & Guidelines 16 March 2020

CONTEXT

COVID-19 is in the community and we need to plan for the potential situation where our participants, families and staff are exposed, infected and diagnosed.

As is the case with COVID-19, infectious diseases can develop into epidemics or pandemics, and create increased risks for the community. This occasion requires specific policies targeted at the particular disease in question and general efforts at preparedness.

Li-Ve Tasmania will aim, as far as possible, to protect our participants, staff, volunteers, and the community from infection or contagion by COVID-19. In line with this policy, as well as procedures and guidelines, we will implement strategies and actions to reduce risks to our participants, staff (includes Directors in this document), and the community.

Li-Ve Tasmania will comply with all directions from authorised public health officers and recognised medical authorities in relation to this pandemic.

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the strategies and actions that Li-Ve Tasmania intends to take to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 but will also become the basis for our future approach to infectious diseases that are epidemics or pandemics, and to control the transmission of infectious diseases when a case or cases are identified.

For the purpose of this policy, 'infectious diseases' means diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi, which can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another. This policy is focused on COVID-19. However, as mentioned, it will form the basis for a future policy on broader infectious diseases that are declared to be an epidemic or pandemic.

This document also includes procedures and guidelines that provide further important detail on how Li-Ve Tasmania will respond to COVID-19 as an emerging external risk with a specific focus on:

- effective infection control
- the safety of participants, families, staff and the community
- business and service continuity

SCOPE

This policy and document applies to:

Employees	Directors	Officers	Contractors (including employees of contractors)	Suppliers	Consultants
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

POLICY

1. Li-Ve Tasmania will, as far as possible, plan for and make advance preparations for the possibility that its operations will be affected by COVID-19.
2. Li-Ve Tasmania will, as far as possible:
 - a) assist its participants, staff and others, as relevant, to minimise their exposure to the illness concerned
 - b) encourage and assist those who have reason to believe that they are at risk of contracting the illness to obtain a diagnosis
 - c) support employees, volunteers, contractors and participants to take reasonable precautions to prevent infection or contagion
 - d) subject to the availability of adequate supplies, provide standard precautions such as personal protective equipment (e.g. masks, soap, hand sanitiser and gloves)
 - e) work to maintain services and operations throughout the period of concern.
3. As COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic, Li-Ve Tasmania requires people covered by this policy to take the following precautions:
 - a) regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or hand sanitiser, or wash them with soap and water
 - b) maintain at least one metre (three feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing
 - c) avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, or shaking hands with others
 - d) follow good hygiene and encourage others to do the same. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and disposing of used tissues immediately
 - e) stay home if you feel unwell. If you are well enough to work but would like to minimise the risk of infecting others, ask your manager/supervisor whether you can temporarily work from home
 - f) keep up to date on the latest hotspots (cities or local areas where the pandemic or epidemic is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are more at risk
 - g) if you are or are likely to be contagious, notify your supervisor/manager as soon as possible. It may be possible or necessary for you to self-isolate by staying at home until you recover
 - h) seek medical advice promptly and follow the directions of your local health authority
 - i) call the Coronavirus health information line on 1800 020 080.

STAFF

Changes in internal procedures will be communicated to staff and an internal single email address will be provided for any concerns related to COVID-19. Staff should follow normal internal processes if they are unwell. The General Manager – Human Resources will consider the current conditions of employment as the basis for a response and then consider what special arrangements may be required for an individual. However, Li-Ve Tasmania does recognise that:

- staff may request or require paid and unpaid leave when they are unwell, at risk of or vulnerable to infection, and at risk of infecting others
- staff may make use of leave consistent with the Li-Ve Tasmania leave policy, relevant industrial instruments and the National Employment Standards (including accessing unpaid leave)
- Li-Ve Tasmanian may, at its discretion, direct those affected or reasonably at risk of being affected by COVID-19, to remain away from the workplace or work remotely.

RESPONSIBILITIES

COVID-19 Response Team (CRT)

A COVID-19 response team has been established. It will manage the implementation of the response in this document and coordinate strategy, compliance and action plans across the organisation. The CRT will include the executive management team and will coopt, as necessary, specific managers in relevant key areas. The CEO will facilitate meetings which will initially be held weekly. Following the stabilisation of the COVID-19 threat, this team will revert to an emergency management team to manage ongoing capability and planning.

The CRT is responsible for:

- working with the Executive on preparation and planning across the organisation
- advising the CEO and Executive on when procedures should be activated and/or reviewed
- communicating with and familiarising staff with policy, procedures and guidelines regarding COVID-19 avoidance
- working with all parts of the organisation to identify mission-critical staff and to implement effective workforce planning.

The CEO working in consultation with the executive team is responsible for:

- establishing and facilitating the CRT and allocating responsibilities to members of the executive and management teams
- ensuring that the organisation's leave and workplace health and safety policies are consistent with the intention of this policy
- assessing the organisation's vulnerabilities, in light of COVID-19, in particular
 - human resources
 - suppliers of goods and services.

Further, now that a pandemic has been declared:

- ensuring effective communications
- giving notice to staff, participants, and any other people likely to be affected that COVID-19 (pandemic) procedures are in effect
- at site and participant/participant level, bringing into operation the management procedures specified below, as required
- instituting any administrative measures necessary to reduce the impact of vulnerabilities

Managers/supervisors are responsible for:

- ensuring that staff are aware of the procedures in effect at any time
- implementing relevant procedures
- providing proactive feedback to the CRT
- raising any concerns, risks or issues and providing feedback to management.

Staff are responsible for:

- abiding by the procedures specified below, when informed by authorised staff that COVID-19 (pandemic) procedures are in effect
- raising any concerns, risks or issues and providing feedback to management.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures apply in the event that the CEO gives notice that COVID-19 (pandemic) procedures are in effect.

Events

The CEO, with the advice of the CRT, will consider, on a continuing basis, whether any events involving the attendance of staff or members of the public should be changed, rescheduled or cancelled to minimise the risk of infection.

Work procedures

The CEO, with the advice of the CRT:

- will consider on a continuing basis whether
 - it is necessary or appropriate for nominated staff to work from home
 - staff travel (or other activities that may cause them to come into contact with other people in Australia or overseas) should be modified or terminated
 - arrangements for staff who work with participants or the public should be modified to minimise risks for all parties
- may require any member of staff to not attend the workplace, to work from home or, if this is not feasible or appropriate, to take leave
- may require any member of staff to provide satisfactory evidence that they are fit to return to work.

Contractors and suppliers

The CEO, with the advice of the CRT, will consider on a continuing basis whether arrangements with existing contractors and suppliers need to be modified or supplemented to ensure uninterrupted service delivery.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES & INFORMATION

The following is specific advice designed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection and subsequent spread within our organisation. We expect all employees to read, understand and follow this advice. It should be noted that we may come into contact with participants, other staff members, families, carers and community members who may be infected but be unaware of their infectious state. The processes in these guidelines are designed to manage the risk to our delivery of essential services. They will also reduce exposure to potential sources of infection and support effective hygiene practices to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Personal hygiene

Staff are reminded to ensure clean clothing is worn daily. This means washing at the end of each shift and line drying, if possible.

Any coughing or sneezing should be into the crook of the elbow.

Hand sanitising/washing is the best tool for the reducing the spread of infection.

Staff must:

- wash hands at the beginning of the work day
- wash hands before and after all participant contact
- keep use hand sanitizer regularly
- wash hands after having a break and returning to the workplace.

Masks/personal protection equipment (PPE)

Masks have limited use in preventing the spread of COVID-19, and wearing face masks is of no real benefit in the general population. However people should take care of their hygiene to prevent the spread of coronavirus (Dr Tony Bartone AMA). Despite this, we expect use in the general community as the media seems to have encouraged use.

Masks will be used by medical teams working in hospital settings with COVID-19 cases and, nationally, these are being stockpiled for use for medical and health services.

Li-Ve Tasmania has a small stock of supplies and is currently working with suppliers, peaks bodies and government departments to identify a dependable and adequate source of masks and PPE, in case these are required. We currently do not have a dependable supply that would be available across the organisation in the event of an outbreak. This needs to be considered by staff when supporting participants. They should note that hygiene, handwashing/sanitising are the key tools required.

Due to the limited availability of masks and PPE, decisions will need to be made on an individual basis and some non-essential services may be discontinued for a period should the risk to staff be too great.

Cleaning own work environment

There is a risk that use of communal spaces and items could increase the spread on any virus including COVID-19.

All staff must wipe their desk telephones, computer and general workspace daily.

Lunch/tea rooms

Staff should avoid eating at their desks. All used utensils must be placed in the dishwasher immediately and not left on the bench. Staff should practice good hygiene in communal spaces.

Physical sites

Where appropriate, the CRT may apply the following (subject to the approval and management of the General Manager – Operations):

Oakdale Lodge and group homes

- phone and electronic contact rather than face-to-face
- limits on access by any external parties
- a review of resident movements beyond the site.

Centre based activities

- cancellation of all programs and activities until such time as the authorities suggest it is safe for groups to meet

The Hobart and Launceston offices

- phone and electronic contact rather than face-to-face, including requests, queries, payments etc.
- limits on access by any external parties
- reduced staff to key/core
- laptops to be taken home, just in case
- working from home arrangements with phone redirection to mobiles as required.

Procedures and arrangements for individual working from home arrangements will be subject to the General Manager – Human Resources' approval and management.

Service delivery

Decisions about services to participants and other stakeholders will be considered and made regularly by the CRT, subject to briefing and recommendations by the General Manager – Operations. Any decisions will be subject to prompt communication to all staff, participants, families and stakeholders. Those affected will be contacted directly by coordinators as the essential first step.

Decisions may include:

- cancellation of non-essential services
- cancellation of group/centre activities/programs
- reduced visits to participants
delivery of meals, supplies and essentials to designated delivery points where physical sites are under limited access or a participant is subject to self-isolation
- amended staffing and roster changes if staff become unwell
- phone contact/support to participants rather than face-to-face
- other issues as identified during an outbreak.

Charges for participants where services are withdrawn at short notice or during delivery through no fault of Li-Ve Tasmania will be initially considered on a case-by-case basis.

Incident management

Where the organisation becomes aware of potential exposure of staff or participants to COVID-19, a risk management plan or plans will instantly put in place including immediate action to monitor the relevant individuals (staff and/or participants) and mitigate broader exposure and infection.

The extent of this action will be proportional to the assessed risk.

Travel

No interstate or overseas travel for business reasons should be booked until further notice. Any current business bookings will be subject to review closer to the travel date. Decisions will be based on the current state of advice from Health authorities. Intrastate travel limitations will be considered by the CRT if required.

Stand down of heightened threat/actions

The CRT will determine when the threat or outbreak concludes having assessed all current information, including from the relevant state and federal health authorities. After this decision, the CRT will meet and debrief on actions, lessons and any further work to be undertaken.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Organisational Risk Register, ratings matrix and mitigation strategies – Risk 12 External threat
- Emergency Management policy, procedures and plan
- Business Continuity and Recovery Plan
- Operational level action plans

RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY INSTRUMENTS

This document is not intended to override any industrial instrument, contract, award or legislation, however it needs to be recognised that, in these extraordinary circumstances, the organisation may require additional flexibility in some areas such as rostering and working from home arrangements to ensure service continuity and risk mitigation.

- Service provider legislation - state and federal
- NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework, NDIS Code of Conduct & NDIS Practice Standards
- Work, Health & Safety Act 2012 (Tasmania)
- Biosecurity Act 2015 (Commonwealth)
- Li-Ve Tasmania Enterprise Agreement/Fair Work Act & Regulations/National Employment Standards

INFORMATION AND KEY CONTACT/NOTIFICATION POINTS

- Department of Health (federal) - <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>
- Department of Health (state) - https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable_diseases_prevention_unit/infectious_diseases/coronavirus
- NDIS - https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable_diseases_prevention_unit/infectious_diseases/coronavirus
- NDIS Commission - notify for certain events as per advice of 9 March see Attachment A



Darren Mathewson

CEO

ATTACHMENT A – advice from NDIA 9 March 2020

CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION FOR PROVIDERS - 9 March 2020

This alert is based on advice from the Australian Government Department of Health that should be regularly reviewed by NDIS providers.

Background

- On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization declared the Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
- Some people with disability are more likely to be vulnerable to the severe adverse effects associated with COVID-19.

Your obligations

As an NDIS provider, you have obligations under the NDIS Code of Conduct and the NDIS Practice Standards, as well as your conditions of registration, that relate to the delivery of safe, quality supports and services, and the management of risks associated with the supports you provide to NDIS participants.

Possible COVID-19 infection of providers, workers and people otherwise engaged by a provider to deliver NDIS supports, and the risk of infection of NDIS participants, present risks that you are expected to manage in the context of your obligations under the NDIS Code of Conduct and relevant NDIS Practice Standards.

The NDIS Code of Conduct requires workers and providers who deliver NDIS supports to NDIS participants to, among other things:

- provide supports and services in a safe and competent manner with care and skill
- promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that might have an impact on the quality and safety of supports provided to people with disability.

The NDIS Practice Standards provide guidance for registered providers, including standards for:

- Governance and operational management, including:
 - having robust governance and operational management systems
 - considering organisational risks, other requirements related to operating under the NDIS, participants' and workers' needs and the wider organisational environment in your strategic and business planning
 - identifying and managing risks, both to participants and workers
 - analysing, prioritising and treating risks to the organisation, including participants, work health and safety risks, and risks associated with providing supports
 - ensuring continuity of support so that participants access timely and appropriate support without interruption, including that disaster preparedness and planning measures are in place to enable continuation of critical supports before, during or after a disaster.
- Provision of supports environment, including:

- that each participant must access supports in a safe environment that is appropriate to their needs. This includes, where relevant, you working with other providers and services to identify and treat risks, ensure safe environments, and prevent and manage injuries
- verification standards include a requirement for risk management, including managing work health and safety, which requires protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of workers and others who may be affected by work activities – including NDIS participants.

NOTIFYING THE NDIS COMMISSION OF CERTAIN EVENTS

It is a condition of your registration with the NDIS Commission that you notify us of changes or events that adversely affect your ability to deliver supports and services to NDIS participants. This includes any change or event that:

- significantly affects your ability to comply with your conditions of registration and the NDIS Practice Standards
- seriously impairs your ability to effectively conduct your operations and deliver ongoing supports or services to NDIS participants
- adversely affects a person with disability's access to the supports or services you are registered to provide.

REDUCING THE RISK TO PARTICIPANTS

While COVID-19 is of concern, it is important to remember that most people who display symptoms (such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness) are likely suffering from a cold or other respiratory illness—not COVID-19.

The Department of Health advises that people most at risk of getting the virus are those who have recently been in in a high-risk country/region and people who have been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of coronavirus.

If a worker has returned from a country or region that is at higher risk for COVID-19, they should not have contact with NDIS participants. This relates to people who:

- have travelled to (including transiting through) mainland China in the 14 days before the onset of illness
- left or transited through Iran on or after 1 March 2020
- have travelled from the Republic of Korea (South Korea) on or after 5 March 2020
- had close or casual contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the 14 days before illness onset.

IN ADDITION, YOU SHOULD REINFORCE STAFF HYGIENE PRACTICES, IN PARTICULAR:

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet (see more information about hand washing published by the Department of Health)
- Covering the mouth when coughing and sneezing, disposing of tissues, and using alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- If unwell, avoiding contact with others (i.e. touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact)

You should review your practices and advice to staff – including your business continuity plans – to prepare for implementing activities that will continue to provide critical supports and services to participants while reducing their risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Undertake contingency planning in the event that staff involved in the delivery of services are affected by COVID-19 and are unable to work.

COVID-19 health information

You should keep up to date with Department of Health recommendations on how to respond should a staff member or an NDIS participant displays symptoms.

The Department of Health website contains useful up to date information on COVID-19, including ways to contact the Department of Health.

Other links

The following resources have been developed by the Australian Department of Health:

- Regular updates on COVID-19
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) resources
- Information for health care and residential care workers
- COVID-19 weekly epidemiology reports, Australia
- Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus
- Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare

The following resources are on the NDIS Commission website:

- NDIS Code of Conduct (NDIS providers)
- NDIS Practice Standards
- Notification of changes or events form (Registered providers)

The following advice is on the NDIA website for providers and participants:

- NDIS and disaster response

— at Provider Academy