
Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to COVID-19 for People with Disability Meeting 3 April 2023 – Summary of Outcomes

Committee members with lived experience of disability, carers and advocates raised these issues:

- closure of state and territory vaccination services with supports tailored for people with disability
- in-home vaccination services availability, and
- advice on use of COVID-19 treatments for people with swallowing difficulties.

The Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) gave a communication update, including:

- information kits for business on COVID-safe behaviours, that will be distributed shortly
- a project to understand how people with disability engage with the department's communications
- the latest advertising campaign on COVID-19 boosters, and
- upcoming flu vaccination communication.

The department's Health Economics and Research Division (HERD) presented on:

- COVID-19 vaccine coverage for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants and Disability Support Pension recipients, and
- outcomes of the Committee's Data Working group meeting on 28 March 2023.

HERD also sought feedback on planned changes to public reporting of vaccination for NDIS participants on the department's website. The proposal is to report on vaccination counts based on date of last vaccine dose, to align with reporting for other populations.

Dr Lucas de Toca from the department provided an update on COVID-19 epidemiology and the COVID-19 vaccine rollout covering:

- possible behaviour of COVID-19 waves in the lead up to winter
- incentives to encourage general practitioners and other suitably qualified health professionals to provide home-visits for COVID-19 vaccination, and
- support Primary Health Networks can give disability accommodation providers to facilitate vaccination access for people with disability.

The Department of Social Services portfolio presented on efforts to boost COVID-19 vaccination rates for people with disability in the lead up to winter. This included:

- using improved COVID-19 data to guide communications
- cross-jurisdictional engagement, and
- messaging through disability channels.

The Committee discussed the need to communicate to disability support providers about the importance of vaccination and their obligations.

Members requested an item on influenza vaccination at the Committee's next meeting.

NEXT STEPS

The department will:

- give an update on advice for the use of COVID-19 oral treatments, including guidance on use for people with swallowing difficulties
- update public information on pathways for COVID-19 vaccination for people with disability
- explore whether it's possible to get the percentage of NDIS participants living in disability accommodation with a COVID-19 vaccine dose or infection in the past 6 months, and
- include influenza vaccination on the agenda for the Committee's next meeting.

The Department of Social Services will circulate a summary of outcomes from its COVID-19 scenario testing workshop held on 18 July 2022.

The Committee's next meeting will be on 2 May 2023.