
Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People with Disability – Extraordinary Meeting 23 June 2021

Key Outcomes

The Australian Department of Health (the Department) gave an update on the COVID-19 vaccination rollout for people with disability and the disability sector. This included updates on:

- the ongoing ramp up of the Phase 1a rollout in disability accommodation
- the status of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout implementation plan for people with disability and the disability sector
- commissioned work to:
 - establish disability support worker focus groups to provide feedback on targeted communication products and messaging about COVID-19 vaccination
 - better understand vaccine hesitancy in a number of populations, including disability support workers
- published and forthcoming communication products, including a webinar for disability workers held on 17 June 2021
- data collection strategies to improve data on vaccination rates among people with disability and the disability workforce, and
- the announcement of a new Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item to support the provision of COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessments in disability accommodation and private homes.

Professor Anne Kavanagh presented further data from the Centre of Research Excellence in Disability and Health's survey of disability support workers' attitudes towards the COVID-19 vaccine, conducted during March-April 2021.

The Advisory Committee raised several issues for consideration, including:

- continuing issues accessing COVID-19 vaccinations
- effective prioritisation of people with disability, support workers and carers eligible in phase 1a and 1b of the vaccine rollout
- the need for clearer communication around vaccine eligibility and access for carers and disability support workers in phase 1b of the vaccine rollout, and
- the need for public data on the status of the vaccine rollout for people with disability and the disability workforce.

The Advisory Committee also discussed advice to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) on the issue of mandating COVID-19 vaccination for disability support workers.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will:

- update the Advisory Committee on the status of the COVID-19 vaccine implementation plan for people with disability and the disability sector at its next meeting
- continue to work with states and territories to improve access to COVID-19 vaccines for people with disability and the disability workforce
- work to improve public reporting on the status of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout for people with disability and the disability workforce, and
- send further information to the Advisory Committee on the new MBS item supporting the provision of COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessments in disability accommodation and private residences.