
**Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus
(COVID-19) for People with Disability
Meeting 15 February 2022 – Summary of Outcomes**

The Department of Health presented data on COVID-19 vaccination rates for people with disability (as of 30 January). This included:

- vaccination rates for children aged 5 to 11 years, and
- vaccine coverage by disability type, jurisdiction and local government area (LGAs).

Particular attention was given to areas where vaccination rates are lagging. There was interest in measures to improve vaccination rates in regional areas where vaccination rates are lagging and methods of sharing data with primary health networks.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr Steph Davis, provided current guidance on the use of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) by disability support workers in residential settings. The Committee discussed:

- the need for guidance on the use of RATs in day programs and supported employment settings
- definitions of a high prevalence setting, and
- guidance on resuming RAT testing after having tested positive.

The National Disability Insurance Agency presented on the [distribution of RATs to supported independent living \(SIL\) providers](#) to support outbreak prevention and management. A minimum of 20% of testing kits distributed directly to SIL providers will be saliva RATs. This proportion will be increased over time, recognising that saliva RATs are more accessible for some people with disability.

The Department provided an update on consideration of digital solutions to improve the accessibility of RATs for people who are blind or vision impaired. The Commonwealth is currently engaging with key stakeholders on this issue.

The Australian Human Rights Commission proposed the adoption of a national system for proof of exemptions to mask wearing requirements. Some people with disability are unable to wear masks due to their disability or a health condition, and requirements for proof of exemptions vary between states and territories. The Committee discussed:

- the pathway for establishing a national system for proof exemption, including the need for agreement from states and territories
- the additional administrative burden such a system might place on people with disability and their families
- the need for such a system to be voluntary
- the need for a non-digital solution to complement any digital certification, and
- the need for risk mitigation to prevent people without a legitimate mask exemption taking advantage of the system.

The Chair invited feedback on a draft Infection Prevention and Control factsheet for people with disability by Friday, 18 February 2022.

Next steps

The Department will seek input from states and territories on the proposed national system for proof of exemption to mask requirements.

Representatives from New South Wales and Western Australia will report on measures to improve vaccination rates in regional areas.

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee is scheduled for 1 March 2022.