
Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People with Disability Meeting 21 June 2022 – Summary of Outcomes

Committee members with lived experience of disability and carers raised the following issues:

- concerns that the requirement for a face-to-face appointment with a GP in the last 12 months to be eligible for Medicare Benefits Scheduled (MBS) telehealth services is limiting telehealth access for housebound people
- the need for in-reach influenza vaccination services for people with disability
- eligibility requirements and information available for COVID-19 oral treatments, and
- concerns about long COVID in people with disability.

The Department provided an update on work underway to address a number of these issues, including:

- development of an information sheet, in consultation with the Committee, on COVID-19 oral treatments and test-to-treat COVID-19 pathways for people with disability
- a written submission to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee proposing an expansion of eligibility criteria for oral COVID-19 treatments, and
- development of a statement from the external members of the Committee to the Government about free influenza vaccinations for people with disability and in-reach vaccination services.

The Department outlined the following activities relating to long COVID:

- a rapid review of evidence has been commissioned by the department
- a fact sheet is being developed to be circulated through GPs, and
- some state and territory health departments are running COVID specific multidisciplinary clinics.

The Department presented data on COVID-19 and influenza vaccination in people with disability, covering rates of vaccination in NDIS and DSP recipients for:

- influenza vaccination by jurisdiction and age
- winter (fourth) COVID-19 doses in people 65 years and over, and First Nations people 50 years and over, by jurisdiction, and
- preliminary analysis of COVID-19 vaccination by socioeconomic status.

The Committee discussed the low rates of influenza vaccination, and the need to make related messaging more prominent. It also held preliminary discussions on research priorities relating to the impacts of COVID-19 on people with disability.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will:

- continue to investigate options to review current exemptions to the existing relationship requirement for MBS telehealth services
- conduct further analysis of influenza vaccination data, including comparison of uptake to previous years, to inform communications campaigns, and
- include an agenda item for a future Committee meeting to further discuss research priorities into the impacts of COVID-19 on people with disability.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 5 July 2022.