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## **Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People with Disability Meeting 7 June 2022 – Summary of Outcomes**

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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, and
- eligibility requirements and information available for COVID-19 oral treatments and test-to-treat pathways for people with disability.

The Department presented information on COVID-19 oral treatments, focussing on Lagevrio and Paxlovid, including:

- contraindications by condition and drug interaction
- efficacy of treatments
- supply of treatments through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), including:
  - through residential aged care facilities, Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Centres, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and state and territory health services (for example, hospitals)
- eligibility for access through the PBS, including criteria for high-risk patients
- the need to access treatments within five days of symptoms arising
- the importance of discussing issues such as eligibility, suitability and availability with a GP before contracting COVID-19
- the ongoing monitoring of eligibility for treatments by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC), and
- the efforts by the Department to provide education around oral treatment pathways to different organisations.

The Committee discussed whether it could make a presentation to the PBAC about eligibility criteria for COVID-19 oral treatments.

The Victorian Government Department of Health presented results of data analysis on the impact of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 on NDIS participants. These results showed a slightly lower infection rate in participants when compared with the general population, but a higher risk of adverse outcomes.

The Department presented on efforts to make national digital solutions more accessible to people with disability. This included:

- extra information about accessibility on the Vaccine Clinic Finder website, and
- innovation fund projects designed to find innovative ways of meeting the needs of people with diverse needs around vaccination.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Department will:

- investigate options to review current exemptions to the existing relationship requirement for MBS telehealth services
- facilitate developing a statement from the external Committee members to the Government about free influenza vaccinations for people with disability and in-reach vaccination services
- investigate how the Committee can provide input to the PBAC regarding eligibility for COVID-19 oral treatments

- develop, in consultation with the Committee, written information on COVID-19 oral treatments and test-to-treat COVID-19 pathways for people with disability
- clarify product guidance about medication delivery, specifically around whether people must swallow COVID-19 oral treatments (Lagevrio) whole or they can crush them, and
- include an agenda item for the next Committee meeting around research into the impacts of COVID-19 on people with disability. This will include contributions from states and territories on related activities.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 21 June 2022.