

# COVID-19 Alert Level guidance for community mental health and addiction services

11 SEPTEMBER 2020

This guidance covers community residential mental health and addiction services, including supported accommodation and respite services. It does not cover DHB specialist community mental health and addiction services. Specialist mental health and addiction services will be operating under district health board (DHB) readiness and response plans.

This document provides high-level guidance and cannot cover all questions that may arise. Please refer to available information on the [health.govt.nz/covid-19](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19) pages and raise any remaining concerns with your DHB or Ministry of Health relationship manager.

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with information available at [health.govt.nz/covid-19](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19) and [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz).

## Essential community mental health and addiction services

- Community mental health and addictions services are an essential service during all COVID-19 Alert Levels, including residential support and respite services. DHBs will continue to provide essential community-based services including opioid substitution therapy, needle exchange programmes, medically managed withdrawal and crisis response services.
- At all Alert Levels, equity should remain central to care with a focus on Māori, Pacific, people with disabilities and vulnerable populations.

## Public health information, prevention and infection control

- At all Alert Levels, services should display signs instructing visitors to follow public health advice and appropriate hygiene measures.
- Services must support and enable contact tracing using the NZCOVID Tracer app.
- At Alert Levels 2, 3 and 4: all in-person visits are preceded by COVID-19 risk screening to ensure visitors pose no risk to clients or staff. Risk screening refers to asking questions about any symptoms, recent travel and any potential recent exposure to COVID-19 such as being a close contact of a confirmed or probable case.
- For all Alert Levels, staff with symptoms or who might meet the higher index of suspicion criteria should follow public health measures and guidance: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-general-public/assessment-and-testing-covid-19>
- At all Alert Levels, public health and Infection Prevention Control (IPC) advice must be adhered to. Physical distancing requirements should be observed at Alert Levels 2 to 4. Find out more information here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-advice-all-health-professionals#procedures>

- At Alert Levels 3 and 4, non-residential community mental health and addiction services should be provided remotely if possible (eg, by video or telephone). In-person appointments may be provided for urgent appointments, with necessary measures to manage public health risks. At Alert Level 2, client contacts may be a mix of in-person or remote, with appropriate public health measures in place.

## Personal protective equipment (PPE), masks and workforce risk assessment

- At all Alert Levels PPE should be used according to the Ministry of Health guidance: <https://www.health.govt.nz/personal-protective-equipment-use-health-and-disability-care-settings>
- The Ministry has updated its advice on the use of face masks in the community as part of New Zealand's ongoing response to COVID-19: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-use-masks-community>
- For Alert Levels 2, 3 and 4: Workforce Risk Assessment and Guidance tools should be used to identify staff vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, to assess and mitigate their risks, including through workplace restrictions and modifications. At-risk staff can work based on the persons self-assessment, agreement with their manager and efforts to limit undue exposure to COVID-19. Where possible, at-risk workers should work virtually or follow all Worksafe and Ministry of Health guidelines on delivery of safe services.
- Guidance and assessment tools being used by DHBs can be found here: <https://tas.health.nz/employment-and-capability-building/employment-relations/dhb-covid-19-workforce-faqs-and-resources/>

## COVID-19 information and resources for health professionals

- The National Telehealth Service advice lines are available at all Alert Levels. This includes Healthline (0800 611 116) and the dedicated COVID-19 health advice line (0800 358 5453) – both available 24/7. The COVID-19 clinical advice line for community health professionals is available Monday to Saturday 8am to 7pm.
- Health workers can use the Āwhina app to stay up to date on the latest COVID-19 information and receive notifications when information is updated. More information can be found here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-awhina-app>

## Mental health and wellbeing resources

- Information and tools to support health and disability workers' mental wellbeing during the COVID-19 response are available at: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources>
- Frontline healthcare workers can access free confidential psychological health and wellbeing support by calling 0800 820 080. The service is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7pm, and will be provided by Health Practitioner Competency Assurance registered health professionals who are skilled and experienced in delivering short psychological interventions targeting acute stress and adjustment reactions.

## Alert Level guidance for community mental health and addiction services

|   | Level 1   | Level 2  | Level 3   | Level 4  |
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| <b>Community residential mental health and addiction facilities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community mental health and addiction facilities will operate as normal while adhering to Alert Level 1 requirements.</li> <li>Facilities should have signs at the entrance for visitors and staff to follow public health advice and appropriate hygiene measures.</li> <li>Screening occurs prior to any admission of residents.</li> <li>Refer all patients who exhibit symptoms for assessment and testing and isolate until a negative test has been received.</li> <li>Refer all staff who exhibit symptoms for assessment and testing. A negative test is required before returning to work.</li> <li>All respite care is available.</li> <li>Community activities for residents continue, with no restrictions on gatherings but:</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community mental health and addiction facilities will operate as normally as possible within Alert Level 2 requirements.</li> <li>Screening occurs prior to any admission of residents.</li> <li>Refer all patients who exhibit symptoms for assessment and testing and isolate until a negative test has been received.</li> <li>Refer all staff who exhibit symptoms for assessment and testing. A negative test is required before returning to work.</li> <li>Ensure hygiene/infection control and distancing guidance is adhered to, isolation areas are maintained, and mental health and wellbeing is supported.</li> <li>All in-person visits are preceded by COVID-19 risk screening.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain staff and client 'bubbles' within facilities.</li> <li>Entry/exit of residential facilities is only for essential and emergency movement (e.g. for hospital admission).</li> <li>Screening occurs prior to any admission of residents.</li> <li>Refer all patients who exhibit symptoms for assessment and testing and isolate until a negative test has been received.</li> <li>Refer all staff who exhibit symptoms for assessment and testing. A negative test is required before returning to work.</li> <li>Ensure hygiene/infection control and distancing guidance is adhered to, isolation areas are maintained, and mental health and wellbeing is supported.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain staff and client 'bubbles' within facilities.</li> <li>Entry/exit of residential facilities is only for essential and emergency movement (eg, for hospital admission).</li> <li>Screening occurs prior to any admission of residents.</li> <li>Refer all patients who exhibit symptoms for assessment and testing and isolate until a negative test has been received.</li> <li>Refer all staff who exhibit symptoms for assessment and testing. A negative test is required before returning to work.</li> <li>Ensure hygiene/infection control and distancing guidance is adhered to, isolation areas are maintained, and mental health and wellbeing is supported.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ records of visits are kept for contact tracing purposes.</li> <li>○ <b>standard hygiene</b> and public health measures for Alert Level 1 adhered to.</li> </ul> <p><i>Visiting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitors must adhere to public health advice and appropriate hygiene measures.</li> <li>• A record of all visitors into the facility should be kept for contact tracing e.g. use of QR code.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-family visits (e.g. health care related visits including pharmacy) allowed if screening shows low risk of COVID-19 is likely.</li> <li>• Community activities for residents continue where physical distancing and other public health requirements can be maintained. Keep records of visits for contact tracing purposes.</li> <li>• Planned respite and urgent respite care available.</li> </ul> <p><i>Visiting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General family visits allowed but with restrictions on the number and frequency of family members visiting.</li> <li>• Visitors must adhere to public health advice and appropriate hygiene measures.</li> <li>• A record of all visitors into the facility should be kept for contact tracing including use of QR code.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All in-person visits are preceded by COVID-19 risk screening.</li> <li>• Stop needs assessment for changes in care level. Alternative arrangements for changing level of care.</li> <li>• Staff movement between facilities should be avoided where possible.</li> <li>• Non-residential contacts will be delivered by video and telephone where possible.</li> <li>• Reduce resident activities to those that maintain physical distancing within facility 'bubbles'.</li> <li>• Planned respite services suspended, residential admissions and urgent/crisis respite care provided.</li> </ul> <p><i>Visiting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All in-person family visits stopped. Facilities should enable contact with family/whānau through other means (such as video and telephone).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All in-person visits are preceded by COVID-19 risk screening.</li> <li>• Stop needs assessment for changes in care level. Alternative arrangements for changing level of care.</li> <li>• Staff movement between residential facilities should be avoided where possible.</li> <li>• Reduce resident activities to those that maintain physical distancing within facility 'bubbles'.</li> <li>• Planned respite services suspended, residential admissions and urgent/crisis respite care provided.</li> </ul> <p><i>Visiting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All in-person family visits stopped. Facilities should enable contact with family/whānau through other means (such as video and telephone).</li> <li>• Essential non-family visits (eg, healthcare, pharmacy, statutory officials) allowed if screening</li> </ul> |
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|                          |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential non-family visits (eg, healthcare, pharmacy, statutory officials) allowed if screening shows low risk of COVID-19. Use video or telephone where possible.</li> <li>• Health screening and assessment of visitors will be completed before entering the facility.</li> <li>• A record of all visitors into the facility must be kept for contact tracing including use of QR code.</li> </ul>  | <p>shows low risk of COVID-19. Use video or telephone where possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health screening and assessment of visitors will be completed before entering the facility.</li> <li>• A record of all visitors into the facility must be kept for contact tracing including use of QR code.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Mental Health Act</b> | <p>For guidance on how the Mental Health Act will operate under Alert Level 1, please see the following link:</p> <p><a href="https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-mental-health-and-addiction-providers">https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-mental-health-and-addiction-providers</a></p> | <p>For guidance on how the Mental Health Act will operate under Alert Level 2, please see the following link:</p> <p><a href="https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-mental-health-and-addiction-providers">https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-mental-health-and-addiction-providers</a></p> | <p>For guidance on how the Mental Health Act will operate under Alert Level 3, please see the following link:</p> <p><a href="https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-mental-health-and-addiction-providers">https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-mental-health-and-addiction-providers</a></p> | <p>For guidance on how the Mental Health Act will operate under Alert Level 4, please see the following link:</p> <p><a href="https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-mental-health-and-addiction-providers">https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-mental-health-and-addiction-providers</a></p> |

# COVID-19