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Subject: COVID-19 - Essential & Non-essential services for DSS providers



COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)

New Zealand Government

Information on essential and non-essential services for disability support service providers

24 March 2020

An initial list and guidance of essential services has been published on covid19.govt.nz and you can view it here: <https://covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/covid-19-alert-system/> This list may be updated before we move to Alert Level 4, so please check that link if the initial list doesn't answer your question right now. Essential services will continue working at Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 4 but will put in place alternative ways of working to keep employees safe, including shift-based working, staggered meal breaks, flexible leave arrangements and physical distancing.

Non-essential businesses must be closed as of today. All bars, restaurants, cafes, gyms, cinemas, pools, museums, libraries, playgrounds and any other place where the public congregate must close their face to face function. Non-essential businesses which can continue operating with staff working from home are encouraged to do so.

A free 0800 number will be set up to help answer questions about this and the number will be posted on the covid19.govt.nz website when the 0800 number is ready.

Principles underpinning the definition of essential service to the health and disability system

- Keep people at home living safely
- Keep people out of hospital where we can
- Where possible get people home from hospital quickly
- Respond to crisis / urgent / acute physical and mental health needs
- To avoid harm to people's mental wellbeing.

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What are essential disability support services?

An essential disability service should be any service providing direct support that maintains a person's necessities of life. The focus is on keeping people living safely in their home. If in doubt, ask yourself: if this service was not provided would the person be at risk of serious harm or hospitalisation. The workforce that deliver those essential services are considered essential workforce, including any suppliers contracted to support this outcome.

If any of these essential services can be provided in alternative ways while keeping people safe (e.g. virtual, phone, post) then you are required to do so.

Disability support services included in essential services are Needs Assessment Service Coordination agencies, Home and Community Support Services, residential services, Individualised Funding (IF) and, some Supported Living (SL), Choice in Community Living (CiCL), Funded Family Carers, FCS, providers under the High and Complex Framework, respite services in the home, NZSL interpreters to enable to Deaf community to access information and services.

Equipment and Modification Services (EMS) that are essential include the provision and repair of essential disability equipment and communication equipment according to the principles above.

Crisis services that provide support for people who feel unsafe are essential.

Services should be prioritised to those people most at risk of harm if those services were not provided. Each provider delivering these services must immediately identify those people most at risk.

What is not an essential disability support service?

Non-essential disability services are Disability Information Advisory Services (DIAS), most Child Development Services (CDS), hearing and vision services, specialist training services, rehabilitation therapies, and behaviour support services.

Services that support people outside of their home, such as day services and facility-based respite must close, and seek to provide virtual, phone, post support as possible.

Non-essential home modifications will be deferred. Vehicles and vehicle modifications are not considered essential during the level 3/4 alert period.

Where ever possible, these services must be delivered in alternative ways (such as virtual, phone, post advice and support). If this is not possible, then services should close.

We will notify you of any updates to this list.

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