



FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION AND RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

FOLLOW-UP CONTACT INFORMATION

There were a number of sites mentioned during the webinar at which additional information could be sourced – including in languages other than English.

These include:

- Beyond Blue – which has increased supports during the COVID-19 period including resources on home schooling: www.beyondblue.org.au or via phone on 1300 22 4636.
- The Black Dog Institute – which has digital mental health tools that can help address COVID-19 issues as well as resources for anxiety and stress: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au.
- MIEACT which can provide advice and resources for workplaces: <https://mieact.org.au/self-care-canberra/>

Multilingual mental health resources

- Beyond Blue - <https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/i-need-support-now/information-in-languages-other-than-english.html> This has information about looking after your mental health during the COVID pandemic in a large number of languages.
- <https://www.embracementalhealth.org.au/> - when you go onto this site it asks what language and provides some translated material in many different languages. It is a national site and is not COVID specific but does have a section on COVID as well as a list of some ACT mental health supports.

Other services which can assist include Red Cross **Wellbeing Call Service**. The Community Services Directorate has worked with the Red Cross to enhance its wellbeing call service in the ACT. The wellbeing calls will connect people with a friendly Red Cross volunteer who can call them once or regularly to check-in and see how they are doing. The calls can be provided in various languages.

For more information or to register, Canberrans can call the service on **02 6234 7630** between 8am and 4pm weekdays or go to www.communityservices.act.gov.au and search for 'Wellbeing Calls'.

Women can also obtain specific general assistance via the ACT's Women's Information line – a free, confidential service that women can call or contact to receive information, support and referral to services, including mental health services. Women accessing the line are provided with information about the services available and supported to select the options that meet their needs. You can reach this line by calling 6205 1075 or emailing wi@act.gov.au

QUESTIONS FROM WEBINAR

Health Questions

1. *In regard to mental health services, people trying to access these services are having issues with access to interpreting services as there are not availability of interpreters in new and emerging languages. How is your team addressing this?*

A. Canberra Health Services (CHS) uses interpreters to help people for whom English is their second language, and for those requiring an Auslan interpreter. Anyone has the right to an interpreter, free of charge, when using Canberra Health Services. Interpreters act in confidentiality and will not share your information with anyone.

The majority of interpreter services are provided over the phone. Interpreters are now also available to support our video-based telehealth services. In some circumstances, organising an interpreter will not be possible. This might be in an emergency treatment situation or where there are few or no interpreters available in the language required. If this occurs, CHS allows multilingual staff and/or the consumer's family or friends to provide translations in situations where basic language skills are sufficient and the risk to the consumer and/or CHS from miscommunication is low. This is particularly useful when the need for immediate communications is critical and multilingual staff or family members can help out.

People can also refuse to use a professional interpreter but this can create additional risks in regard to treatment.

It is the policy of CHS to use NAATI accredited Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) interpreters and translators. As a national body, TIS is in the best position to draw on available interpreting and translating sources from across Australia. This is particularly the case for new arrival communities where the number of speakers of a language may be small.

2. *Need to know what numbers of people are in quarantine and to inform the community. Is good to know the statistics and the community to know where the hot spots are in ACT.*

- A. At time of writing the ACT has no active cases of COVID-19 and has not had any for some time. As a consequence, there are no “hot-spots”.

The number of people in quarantine varies from day to day. We appreciate that there may be a concern in the community about risks associated with people in quarantine, but these risks are being managed. All people in quarantine are provided with information about their quarantine obligations and are contacted daily to assess their health and any potential support requirements. ACT Policing also conducts regular compliance checks on individuals who are in quarantine. So far, the ACT has had very good compliance from people in quarantine.

3. *We would like to know if there are any community groups that are more at risk?*

- A. Overall, your risk of becoming infected depends on you having contact with someone with COVID-19 or surfaces contaminated by the virus. In assessing your risk of this happening, the local situation is a major factor. When the ACT has low or no cases and no evidence of community transmission, then the risk of contracting COVID-19 is low for everyone.

There are certain groups of people who are at higher risk of developing severe illness if they get COVID-19. While anyone who becomes ill with COVID-19 can develop severe symptoms, some people are at greater risk of getting very sick.

Age is the strongest risk factor for developing severe COVID-19 illness and death. Risk increases as you get older, particularly for those over 70. There is a higher risk for people who:

- have had an organ transplant and/or are on immune suppressive therapy;
- have had a bone marrow transplant in the last 24 months or are on immune suppressive therapy for graft versus host disease;
- have a haematologic (blood) cancer e.g. leukaemia, lymphoma or myelodysplastic syndrome (diagnosed within the last 5 years);
- are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy; or
- have other chronic health conditions.

Some community situations can increase the risk of COVID-19 spreading. Factors such as larger household groups, large extended family groups, increased levels of socialising within a family or community group, and some types of employment or work related activities can result in more rapid spread of COVID-19.

All people can decrease their risk by:

- practising physical distancing;
- practising good cough and hand hygiene;
- considering downloading the COVIDSafe app;
- keeping up to date with your vaccinations, including vaccination against seasonal flu; and

- staying at home and getting tested for COVID-19 if you are unwell with even mild cold or flu-like symptoms.

Communication Questions

1. *Don't forget the people locked up in our jail the AMC.*

A. Safeguarding the health of detainees, staff and the public has been, and will continue to be, the immediate priority for ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) throughout this public health emergency. Managing detainees, staff and visitors in a correctional facility is a challenge in preventing an outbreak, however, ACTCS have implemented all necessary preventative measures to protect the health and safety of detainees and staff.

In March, all social visits to the AMC were temporarily suspended to assist in limiting the risk of infection to detainees, visitors and staff. On 9 September 2020, in line with the easing of restrictions, limited face to face visits at the AMC recommenced. A number of interim changes to visit guidelines remain in place to meet public health requirements. These include:

- Enhanced screening processes including the completion of a COVID-19 Screening Form and a Temperature check on arrival.
- Social distancing principles applying during visits.
- Visits are limited to immediate family and partners only, with a maximum of one adult and one child able to attend any one visit.

Justice Health Services introduced new procedures for detainees to identify at-risk groups and those with flu-like symptoms, consistent with laws and human rights. Any detainee with flu-like symptoms is immediately isolated and tested for COVID-19. This testing has been accompanied by precautionary isolation of symptomatic detainees, and effective precautionary 'contact tracing' such that cell mates and others, that have been in contact are also isolated for short periods of time while awaiting either symptoms or testing. To date, there have been no positive test results at the AMC.

Detainees also have access to independent medical care as ACTCS is working closely with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, who provide an Indigenous holistic health care to detainees, to ensure detainees continue to have access to culturally informed health care during this time. ACTCS also continues to work closely with the Health Protection Service and Justice Health Services to implement procedures to monitor detainee health and protect vulnerable prisoners, particularly older detainees and those with comorbidities or immunosuppression.

Detainees are provided weekly COVID-19 updates from the Commissioner, ACTCS and are notified of changes as they occur. Visitors are notified of changes in a timely manner.

An ACTCS Pandemic Arrangements Plan was developed and adopted in March 2020 and outlines the necessary actions if an outbreak were to occur.

2. *Will community leaders be trained to provide information to support their communities?*
 - A. ACT Health has sought to engage community leaders in the sharing of information with community members via the fortnightly Community Partner Update bulletin and such events as this Chief Health Officer webinar. Along with other means of communication and engagement which we are working on, we believe these things are the most effective way to provide information to community leaders which they can then share with their communities.

The bulletin will continue to be provided through this period and we are considering running additional information webinars.

3. *In regard to quarantine and isolation, people who are hard to reach in terms of language barrier, how do you reach them if they are unable to have information in their languages?*

- A. As advised in response to other questions, we have developed tools which we believe assists community leaders to share information with their community members.

We will continue to develop translated information resources but translated materials are just one tool by which to provide information. We also understand that sometimes specific information tools – and specific language translations - have to be developed to meet the needs of specific community groups.

4. *Can we work with the community leaders to share information and help to eliminate fear and anxiety as we know our community better?*

- A. As noted in the answer to Q2 above, we are already providing information to community leaders via such methods as the Community Partner Update bulletin and the Chief Health Officer webinar. We have also established a critical friends reference group which includes members of Canberra's multicultural communities to provide advice and guidance on our materials.

We agree that community leaders are in a good position to address information needs and other issues and will continue to work with them as part of our response to COVID-19.

Other Questions

1. *Can we help Melissa find some support groups who can help her with the severe isolation and also with social support?*

- A. We have reached out to Melissa through her colleague Gavin. If she requires assistance, Gavin will let us know.
2. *What does the Government have in place to support people on a temporary or student visa who are not eligible for all the other income support provisions put in place for COVID-19?*
- A. There are a range of ACT services and financial support for temporary visa holders, including international students, to assist during the COVID-19 pandemic.

\$450,000 has been made available to help those who are unable to go home, work, or receive Australian Government support. It will also help with the basics, so people can survive this period. In addition, these groups are a priority for the Jobs for Canberrans program.

For more details on the programs available because of this funding, go to www.communityservices.act.gov.au/connect-in-canberra/Community-Services-and-Support.

For Canberrans seeking asylum, additional advice is available through Companion House Reception on (02) 6251 4550 or via email at info@companionhouse.org.au. For Canberrans on other temporary visas, additional advice is available through the Red Cross ACT Migration Support Program HUB on (02) 6234 7695.