

## Adjusting our practice to keep everyone safe: NADA COVID-19 FAQs



A number of NADA members services made the shift to providing support virtually, whether that was to stay connected while on a waiting list, or to provide counselling, case management or group work to people who had reached out for Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) treatment. Now with vaccination rates increasing and lockdowns easing, we acknowledge that COVID-19 is here to stay and so we adapt again. Outlined below are some responses to frequently asked questions by members as they provide face to face treatment and/or hybrid in person and virtual care.

### ***All our staff are vaccinated, can we expect client to prove their vaccination status?***

While there is a Public Health Order in place for all health workers funded by the NSW Government to be fully vaccinated, this does not include people accessing health services. No person can be refused access to a health service as a result of their vaccination status. There may be a number of reasons they have not been vaccinated. As part of providing holistic care, people should be provided factual information about vaccinations and you have a role to link them supportively to access if they express a desire to be vaccinated.

- How to get proof of your COVID-19 vaccination – [here](#)
- Guidance on how to speak with people about vaccination - [here](#)
- Guidance on how to speak with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – [here](#) and [here](#)
- FAQs from the NSW Ministry of Health on the Public Health Order - [here](#)

### ***What about young people – should they be vaccinated?***

Vaccinations are available to anyone over the age of 12 years. Currently children under 12 years in Australia are not being offered a vaccine, unless the TGA provides specific advice/approval.

- You can read more information about vaccinations for young people - [here](#)

### ***Do we still get people to check in via the QR code as they enter our service?***

Yes. All people entering your services should check in as usual and check out when they leave. By now your service would have put in place a [COVID Safety Plan](#) – which provides adequate information and clear signage about what is required by people entering your service. Your service should have hand sanitiser and masks on offer to people as they enter and encourage them to engage in these protocols – read more [here](#).

### ***Should I wear a mask in a face to face service delivery?***

Masks should be offered to people attending your service on entry, and it is also advisable that they are told about the protocols and practices you have in place before they arrive. Clear signage will also support people to understand the processes you have agreed to in your workplace. While it is not a current requirement to wear a mask with someone in an office where there is adequate space to practice social distancing, we would recommend that you discuss this with your team and try to reach a mutual understanding about what the expectations are of the service. All staff and clients should have the option to wear a mask if that makes them feel safe and comfortable. Ventilation is also very important and increasing the circulation of fresh air, from outside, and avoid recirculated air where possible.

- Information about mask wearing can be found - [here](#)
- Ventilation is important and you can read more about it - [here](#)

***After the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, there will be no restrictions for unvaccinated people – what will that mean for our services?***

Overall, there should be no need to change your COVID safety plans and continue to take a universal approach to people accessing your service in that they may all have the potential to be COVID positive and spread the virus. With this in mind, clear information on your website, at the front door and on entry will alleviate any confusion about what is expected when people attend your service.

***I am worried, should we be holding off on face to face contact with clients?***

The public health advice would advise that face to face contact is safe, as long as people adhere to the COVID safety provisions to reduce the possibility of COVID spread such as:

- Not attending a service if you have any cold or flu-like symptoms or do not feel well
- Not attending a service if you have recently been to an area that is recorded as a hot spot - check [here](#)
- Sanitise your hands regularly, wear a mask and check in and out using the QR code

***Should we continue to offer virtual counselling and support?***

A number of people have found access to virtual support to be very helpful and if your service has the capacity this option should still be made available to those who would like it. You may need to consider setting up a specific space for your staff to conduct virtual counselling and support if you decide to provide a hybrid model.

- More information on Virtual Care can be found - [here](#)

***Should all staff have a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) before commencing work?***

***- And what about clients?***

Rapid Antigen Testing is utilised in a number of health and corporate settings as an additional measure to keep people safe. You can read about the RATs that have been approved and find a variety of information about RATs by [the TGA here](#). It should be noted that should a RAT register a positive result, a follow up PCR test at a clinic needs to be done. People who are not health practitioners can perform the tests, but it is advised that they be provided sufficient training and that there is some overall contact with a health service. NSW Health has prepared a [Framework for the Provision of Rapid Antigen Screening for COVID-19 in Clinical and Non-Clinical Settings](#).

***What do I do if I suspect a person I am seeing a client face to face is not well?***

As with any situation, information provided in advance with empathy and care goes a long way to mitigating any challenging situations. Ensure that all people attending your service have already been prepared with information about your COVID safety plan, processes and protocols. If you have concerns while a person is in a session that they are unwell, then suggest that the session be postponed and ensure their safe passage back to their place of residence. Ensure that a follow up virtual appointment has been made and activate your COVID safety plan and alert (where appropriate) your COVID Management Team.

***How should we manage a group session?***

Any group sessions should proceed with a clear COVID Safety Plan in place and take into account adequate space for social distancing. Masks and a sanitising station should be offered to participants as they enter, in addition to QR codes for checking in and checking out. Checking in with participants 24 hours before the group session to ensure they have no current cold or flu symptoms or are unwell, is good practice and provides an opportunity to remind them of the processes you have in place. Ensure that the space has sufficient ventilation for the number of people attending and ask any companions to wait outside.

**You may want to take the time to check out the [Clinical Excellence Commission COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Manual](#) – which has a useful section on Non-acute healthcare settings - [here](#)**

**Do you have another question you would like answered? If so, reach out to [Suzie@nada.org.au](mailto:Suzie@nada.org.au)**