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**Advisory Committee on Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People  
with Disability**  
**Seventh Meeting: 12 May 2020**  
**Key Outcomes**

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The Department of Health (the Department) provided an update to members of the Advisory Committee on the progression of a number of priority items. Expressions of Interest have now closed for the health professionals' advisory phone service, and the Department is reviewing applications. A number of guidance materials, including advice for health professionals and for families, will be published on the Department's website ([health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au)) in the coming days. The Department thanked the Advisory Committee for its tremendous contribution and assistance in progressing key actions within the Plan. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission provided an update to the Advisory Committee on surveillance infection data for NDIS participants.

Each state and territory representative provided an update on the situation for people with disability in their jurisdiction and the initiatives currently being carried out to support them. Furthermore, an update was provided from each Department of Justice, via the representative, on what measures were in place to support people with disability in correctional facilities.

The Advisory Committee discussed a range of topics including, but not limited to:

- the immediate need for a considered approach, and risk-based guidance on returning to the school environment for students with disability especially those who are medically vulnerable;
- the issue of some disability support workers and carers not being recommended/or not willing to have COVID-19 testing when they display symptoms;
- the need to consider disability support workers in the same category as teachers and frontline workers when considering which population groups should be prioritised for testing;
- the importance of being able to identify people with disability in the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System data, noting the Department has put a request forward to the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) to include this;
- ensuring people with disability, their families and carers are aware of the significant work being undertaken to implement the COVID-19 Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability;
- the need to consider how best to support people with disability as they begin to re-enter mainstream community as the restrictions within in each state and territory ease; and
- praise for the collaborative and productive relationship developing between the health and disability sectors.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- The Advisory Committee will continue to meet weekly, with state and territory representatives invited to attend meetings on an ongoing basis. Consideration is being given as to whether the meetings will move to a fortnightly basis.
- The Department will continue to progress the individualised health plans for people with disability, the Evaluation Framework and the establishment of an advisory phone service for health professionals.
- The Department will work with the Chief Nursing Officer to create a video explaining how to use PPE.

- The next iteration of the Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability will be provided to the Advisory Committee by the end of the week.
- The Department and the Department of Social Services will collaborate with the Department of Education to consider the health needs of students with disability returning to school and the associated communications required.
- The Department will investigate the issue of some disability support workers and carers not being recommended/or willing to have testing when they display cold symptoms.
- Moving forward, the Advisory Committee meeting and the Roundtable for People with Disability will not be held during the same week. For the Roundtable, the Department will explore alternative mechanisms to teleconference to support more accessible and inclusive communication.