

Managing employee wellbeing during COVID-19

Resources on how to maintain mental health for managers and employees.

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On this page you'll find resources on how to maintain mental health for managers and employees, LGBTIQA+ employees, employees with childcare responsibilities and other caring responsibilities, people with disability, Aboriginal employees and remote and regional employees.

The Commonwealth Government **Head to Health** recommends that individuals stay mentally healthy by:

- *Maintaining a healthy lifestyle:* Setting up a daily routine, staying active, eating well and connecting with friends and family via phone, chat, email or video conferencing.
- *Staying informed:* Getting information from trusted sources can help you decide what precautions to take.
- *Staying positive:* Recognising that this is unpleasant, but it will pass.
- *Accessing support:* If you're feeling overwhelmed, get help now by calling **Beyond Blue** or **Lifeline** (more details below).

For all information on staying physically safe and healthy during COVID-19, including caring for those who may be unwell, visit the [NSW Government's COVID-19 webpage](#).

Individual employees: help when you need it

It is important to get help when you feel you need it. For immediate assistance and someone to talk to you can contact:

- [Beyond Blue](#) call 1800 512 348 for advice and support based on your specific needs.
- [Lifeline](#) offers support and counselling.
- [Mensline Australia](#) is a telephone and online counselling service for men with emotional health and relationship concerns.
- [1800 Respect](#) is open 24 hours to support people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse. Their website includes options for contacting them if you are afraid someone may find out you visited it.

If you are looking for psychological tips on how you can cope with the pandemic, start by reading [this advice from Head to Health](#).

For helpful information on managing mental health while working from home and to hear stories from others in the public sector visit:

- the Black Dog Institute's website for information on how to [manage anxiety during COVID-19](#) and steps on how to [manage your mental health while working from home](#), including [ways of exercising and staying active during the Pandemic](#) and how it can benefit mental health.
- IPAA NSW's [GenYPN vodcast](#) series on how young professionals have adapted to working from home.

Managers: how to support your team

Managing staff wellbeing during COVID-19, including remote working for the first time for many, can be difficult. Beyond Blue suggests some easy methods to help you [support your employees](#) during COVID-19.

To [identify if a remote working employee is struggling](#), R U OK Day says to ask yourself:

- Are they using their normal tone or language?
- Are they posting more or less?
- Are they answering your calls?
- Are they communicating as you would expect?

Practical advice on managing a remote team during COVID-19 is available on our [Flexible working tools webpage](#).

Other government agencies and wellbeing organisations have outlined ways you can support team wellbeing:

- Be alert to manage your own mental health with Beyond Blue's advice on [protecting your own mental wellbeing as a manager](#).
- SafeWork NSW provides further detailed guidance on [how to support employees wellbeing during COVID-19](#).
- HeadsUp has created dedicated resources to help [Managers](#) manage wellbeing and [Leaders](#) managing wellbeing in their teams.
- iCare NSW has a series of factsheets and tip sheets on [how leaders can manage staff stress](#), including working together as a group, in remote teams and sleep.

How to adapt your organisation

SafeWork NSW is the lead organisation for maintaining organisational health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. SafeWork NSW's [COVID-19 and Mental health at work](#) webpage gives information on the legal responsibilities agencies have during this time. They also give tips to support employees at work.

Practical advice on managing a remote team during COVID-19 is available on our [Flexible working tools webpage](#).

Beyond Blue has created a [guide on developing a mental health strategy](#).

LGBTIQA+: Supporting our community

LGBTIQA+ employees can get immediate support by phoning or video calling [ACON counselling](#) care coordination and intake services.

Members of the LGBTIQA+ community often experience poorer mental health outcomes and have higher risk of suicidal behaviours than their peers. Physical distancing and social isolation measures can have further negative impacts on the wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ employees:

- Physical distancing may be particularly difficult for those who have been rejected by their families or who are not out with their families and are now forced to isolate at home with them. Closeted LGBTIQA+ employees may feel unable to express themselves and experience a fear of being outed.
- Physical wellbeing is a concern as LGBTIQA+ employees may be isolating at home with families or communities who are unaccepting or abusive of them.
- Families with LGBTIQA+ parents can struggle to formalise documents and relationships legally as documents issued in one country might not be recognised in another. This could lead to LGBTIQA+ people being stranded by travel bans and unable to return to their families.
- LGBTIQA+ people may need to travel long distances to access specialised care with a trusted provider. Lockdowns and travel restrictions may severely limit this access.

Employees can also reach out to their workplace LGBTIQ+ staff network for peer support. If a peer network exists in your workplace look for contact information on your intranet or social media pages (such as Yammer or Workplace). You can also **contact us** for connections to your local network.

There are also dedicated LGBTIQ+ organisations outside of the workplace offering support services at this time:

- **ACON NSW** provides dedicated advice on some issues that LGBTIQ+ employees may be facing including living with HIV during COVID-19 and issues faced by older LGBTIQ+ people, Trans and Gender Diverse people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- **TransHub by ACON** has a dedicated page of information and support for trans and gender diverse people in NSW.
- The **National LGBTI Health Alliance website** has a list of health, legal and wellbeing resources for LGBTIQ+ people.
- **Intersex Human Rights Australia** has a webpage outlining actions and support for people with intersex variations, including advice for policy makers.
- **QLife provides anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support** and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships via daily webchat daily phone support.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: supporting your staff to stay strong

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly those living in remote communities, 50 years or over, or with a chronic health issue, may be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 risks. This section lists specific organisations and resources which support Aboriginal staff, however all the information on this web page is relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

The federal coordinating body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and mental health is Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia. They have developed comprehensive mental health **advice and tips for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** to stay mentally strong during this time.

These organisations support and provide relevant information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- **NACCHO** represents 143 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services across the country on Aboriginal health and wellbeing. They have developed a range of COVID-19 resources.
- The **NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council** also has a range of resources and a list of all NSW Aboriginal Medical Services.
- The **NSW Aboriginal Land Council** is offering assistance to their members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Beyond Blue has developed a [dedicated COVID-19 support webpage](#) for information on the wellbeing and mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Disability: Supporting ourselves, our friends and colleagues

As people's homes may now be doubling as their workspace, it is important that people with disability are able to access the same adjustments they may have had in place when they were in the office, or any additional [adjustments](#) they may require in their new working environment.

By supporting staff with changed ways of working, including the equipment they require, you are ensuring the continued productivity and safety of employees with disability.

These organisations and government agencies have developed specific information for people with disability to help them seek support if needed:

- The [Australian Network on Disability](#) has developed a number of resources to support employees with disability through new ways of working.
- The Department of Social Services has set up a [Disability Information Helpline](#) which provides information and referrals for people with disability who need help or information on COVID-19. The helpline is available Monday to Friday 8 am to 8 pm and Saturday and Sunday 9 am to 7 pm.
- [People with Disability Australia](#) have set up a COVID-19 Hub webpage which includes Disability-focused Information such as latest news and Accessible Resources.
- First Peoples Disability Network Australia have [information for First nations people with disability](#).
- Women with Disabilities Australia have [information for women with disability](#).
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance have a list of [resources in community languages](#).

Parents: managing children and wellbeing while working

Managing work and children during COVID-19 can be difficult. Some office-based employees may need to switch to part-time or job share in the short-term or utilise leave to reduce the hours worked each day during this period. We have created [role adjustment for employees](#) and [role adjustment for managers](#) toolkits to help staff manage at home commitments.

[Relationships Australia NSW](#) is a dedicated support service for families. They offer practical advice on how to manage wellbeing at home, including advice on [returning to school](#). Reach Out has developed targeted resources to support [parents caring for teenagers](#).

If your children, or children you know, need support they can contact [Kids Helpline](#) anytime on 1800 55 1800. They provide free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling for young people aged five to 25.

Remote and regional locations: supporting your staff

Many NSW Government employees work in rural or regional locations and have overcome significant challenges in the last year to solve problems and deliver services for the people of NSW. However, working and living in a rural or regional areas brings unique concerns when coping with wellbeing during COVID-19.

The Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health has [created a series of blog posts and factsheets](#) on how to support yourself, and others in rural and remote areas. They have also released a [podcast discussing COVID-19](#) and wellbeing in regional and remote communities.

Older Australians: resources for seniors and carers

Older Australians are at greater risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19 and are also at risk of becoming isolated and vulnerable during physical distancing. Not only is a significant portion of the NSW Government workforce in older age categories, but many government employees are supporting or caring for older Australians.

[Beyond Blue](#) suggests that you can support older Australians by:

- Providing social and practical support.
- Helping them stay connected.
- Sharing good-quality, reliable and up-to-date information.
- Assisting them with healthcare needs.

These organisations offer support to older Australians and their carers:

- [Carers NSW](#) provides advice and support for NSW based carers.
- Beyond Blue maintains a dedicated page on [supporting older people](#) with depression and anxiety.
- [E-Safety Australia has created advice](#) for older Australians going online, including tips for shopping online and monitoring news.