

## COVID-19 additional update 16 March

As noted in this morning's Bulletin we wanted to provide further guidance to support your response to COVID-19. The situation is rapidly evolving.

The Government announcement in the weekend requires all arrivals from overseas to self-isolate. This will strongly contribute to "smoothing the curve" in regard to the numbers of cases we do get in New Zealand.

It is important to note we continue to have no confirmed cases in schools or early learning services. The policy decisions being made by Government give us time to plan for future scenarios.

You need to understand the health risks to your students and staff to inform your decisions.

The most likely scenario is if a student or staff member is confirmed with COVID-19, Health may require a school to close for a day or two, to undertake tracking and tracing of close contacts. A reminder that a close contact is generally described as someone who was in near proximity (1.5 metres) of a person confirmed with the virus for 15 or more minutes. For those with compromised immunity that is 2 metres.

As you know, we are talking with all schools to work through the supports that may be needed.

### **Camps, assemblies and other events**

You will be aware that Government will be making announcements about mass gatherings this week.

In the meantime, as you do with all your activities, you will need to take a risk assessment approach for key activities such as assemblies, school camps and travel for sporting and cultural reasons.

You will know that health and safety is paramount when providing opportunities for positive experiences for your children and young people.

As an example for a school camp you will have already identified a serious injury or illness as a risk, and identified how you would respond to that. In light of COVID-19 you should add the following to your considerations:

- be aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 (which may be similar to other illnesses in the early stages)
- the importance of protecting those vulnerable to respiratory illness – do you know who on your staff, in your volunteers and in your student population may be at greater risk?
- if someone were to become ill with a serious illness, do you have facility to be able to respond to that, including the ability to isolate that person while you seek advice from public health?
- do you have appropriate personal protective equipment and the ability to clean hard surfaces if someone were to become ill with flu, gastro bug, COVID-19 etc?

If you cannot answer yes to all these questions, you will need to reconsider proceeding with the camp.

For assemblies you need be confident that participants can maintain a safe physical distance from each other. This would be 1.5 metres and for immune compromised people, 2 metres from others. Consider:

- encouraging good hygiene at all times – hand washing, coughing etiquette etc
- splitting the assembly where this is an option
- reducing the number of assemblies
- thinking about current practices – handshakes, hongi etc - as noted by the Prime Minister we need to stop these practices

#### **Personal travel**

Your Board Chair needs to talk to your staff about any upcoming travel they have planned. Individuals are strongly encouraged to postpone or cancel any non-essential personal overseas travel.

Where a staff member has not yet left New Zealand, but intends to do so, your Board should advise them that, if you cannot agree how to manage the necessary self-isolation period, then this will become unpaid discretionary leave. [Further information is available from Employment New Zealand here:](#)

The Board's obligation as an employer to consider all leave requests in good faith, remains. You may decline a new leave request where it is reasonable to do so due to the operations of the school.

If a staff member is planning to holiday within New Zealand, their leave can proceed as planned.

Tomorrow's Special Bulletin will include updated information about how to provide and record leave for all staff who are sick with COVID-19, or required to self-isolate.