

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – National Health Advisory

- The following text in italics is from a National Health Advisory issued on 11 April 2020.

The Ministry has asked that all DHBs distribute sufficient levels of PPE to publicly funded Health and Disability providers. These providers are currently delivering essential community services, including those such as disability, aged care, and home and community support. The Ministry recently sent over 1.2m masks for DHBs to distribute to these providers with a clear expectation that these would be distributed as soon as possible.

Providers have raised the issue that they believe some DHBs aren't taking into account the size of their workforce when considering their orders for PPE. Providers who employ care and support workers vary significantly in size with the largest employing over 5,000 workers.

These workers provide essential support to a large number of vulnerable people in the community. Most of this support requires close contact with clients, and at times intimate personal care. The Ministry's expectation is that DHBs distribute sufficient levels of PPE. Can you please ensure that your DHB is continuing to supply PPE for this vital workforce of over 60,000 people.

Sourcing of PPE

Sourcing of PPE is managed at a national level to ensure ongoing supplies are adequate. Significant orders have been placed and new stock are arriving.

National model for distribution

Our new national model for distribution of PPE comes into effect from Tuesday 14 April. This initially involves the distribution of masks. It will be expanded to include other PPE. Further updates on this will be provided shortly.

Under this new process, DHBs will need to work with community-based health and disability service providers to determine their PPE needs. The DHB will then submit a consolidated order to OneLink, which has been contracted to coordinate orders. OneLink will then send the filled order back to the DHB for it to distribute within its region.

There are two exceptions to this:

(i) in Hawke's Bay and Nelson Marlborough DHB regions the PPE equipment will be sent to health and disability service providers direct from OneLink - subject to the required delivery addresses being confirmed to One Link.

(ii) St John, Wellington Free Ambulance, FENZ and New Zealand Blood Service will be managed via national supplies.

Note: The Ministry had intended that the filled orders would be sent to health and disability service providers direct from OneLink. We have altered the model at the request of DHBs. Some DHB will operate a regional approach to ordering and distribution. We will monitor how this goes. We will work with DHBs to make this successful. However, if we are not able to address the concerns of the community based health and disability service providers, we will move to the originally intended mode.

PPE ordering process

The PPE ordering process involves the following steps:

- *fill out the PPE order form (available from Tuesday 14th April). One Link will contact you directly on Tuesday with your login and user details*
- *note that each order is to cover two weeks' worth of supplies*
- *orders are to be placed by 10am each Wednesday*
- *orders will be confirmed by close of business that same Wednesday*
- *distribution will be completed within seven days from ordering cut off.*

When placing an order, you will also need to advise the Ministry of Health on the stock of PPE you currently hold. This will help inform future distribution at a national level.

PPE guidance and use

We encourage the responsible use of PPE. The following information provides guidance on keeping safe at work, including whether workers need face masks:

Information for essential workers:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-essential-workers-including-personal-protective-equipment>

Information for PPE in health care (includes information for specific groups):

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-essential-workers-including-personal-protective-equipment/personal-protective-equipment-use-health-care>

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to ensure that our health care workers are provided with the PPE they need to keep them safe. As per the updated guidelines, the provision of PPE (including face masks) is one strategy within a hierarchy of effective infection prevention and control measures, should the health care worker wear a mask (after determining the risk) then they need to follow the guidelines of safe use.

- *Note: DSS Providers are a priority group and DHBs have a list of provider contacts for PPE allocation, including Individualised Funding Hosts. Hosts will distribute directly to people on Individualised Funding.*

Please note that information on PPE use, supply and distribution is being updated regularly, so keep referring to the COVID19 and Ministry websites for the latest.