

Ministry of Health advice to disabled people and whānau who are directly employing staff

19 March 2020

This advice is for people who are on Individualised Funding, Enhanced Individualised Funding, and Enabling Good Lives / Mana Whaikaha Personal Budgets who employ their support staff.

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with information available at health.govt.nz/covid-19

Key points:

- It is important that support workers who need to self-isolate or are sick do not come to work. They should be paid to take leave from work.
- The Ministry of Health will find a way to make sure that you will have enough funding to pay for staff leave relating to COVID-19.
- Have a plan for finding other people to support you if your staff need to self-isolate.
- The Ministry is working with individualised funding hosts this week and will provide further information on Individualised Funding, Enhanced Individualised Funding, and Personal Budgets in the coming days.

Paying staff if they need to self-isolate

As at 18/3/2020, the government advice on what leave types you should use is:

- If the support worker has been identified (under Ministry of Health Guidelines) as being sick with COVID-19 – Then they should take paid sick leave. If an employee has used up all their sick leave, the support worker should be paid special paid leave / alternative leave.
- If the worker is required to self-isolate (under Ministry of Health Guidelines), but is not sick - paid special leave / alternative leave should be considered.

Other forms of paid leave can be used by agreement between the employer and the employee. Any further advice on employer responsibilities for health and safety-related to CO-VID 19 is available at: <http://bit.ly/MBIECOVID-19>

How to pay for leave for your staff relating to COVID-19

If you are concerned that COVID-19 and Self-Isolation mean that you cannot pay your staff **right now**:

If you believe that your existing Personal Budget or Individualised Funding arrangements can not cover payment for leave of staff who are self-isolating or the costs of replacing staff, please contact your NASC, EGL office or host provider.

If you are concerned that COVID-19 and Self-Isolation mean that you cannot pay your staff **later on**:

Your funder will consider if costs related to self-isolation have affected your use of your personal budget and may change your funding allocation. Any change to your allocation will be consistent with national practice for recognising these costs within the disability support sector.

How to find replacements for staff who are self-isolating

In the first instance, you should use the same arrangements you would use for any support worker being unwell or on leave. If you can, you should consider reaching out to your natural/community networks for support; this could be your family, neighbours and community groups. You may wish to consider:

- recruiting to expand your pool of support workers now, so that you have a wider group of people to call on (e.g. through student job search, MyCare or e-mploy)
- linking with other families to share a support worker
- asking other organisations that may be able to assist (e.g. teacher aides from school, support workers from other services you use)

If these arrangements do not work for you, please contact your Host Provider, Connector, Mana Whaikaha, or Enabling Good Lives offices.

Paying resident family carers to provide cover for self-isolating support workers will be considered by the local NASC or Mana Whaikaha on a case by case basis, in advance of the April 14 changes to Funded Family Care.

Key Links:

For more health information about COVID-19 see:

Ministry of Health - COVID-19 Information

Self-isolation information

COVID-19 Sign Language

COVID-19 - information for disabled people and residential care providers

New Zealand Relay (if you need relay service support to access information)

Contact details

NASC contact details

Enabling Good Lives

Mana Whaikaha

For wider government information