GUIDE TO USING FAMILY AND DISABILITY SERVICES – CLIENT CONTACT RISK ASSESSMENT - COVID-19

The Family and Disability Services Client Contact Risk Assessment – COVID-19 is a resource to support practitioners to assess the risk of COVID-19 from a health perspective and to support the physical and psychological safety of our clients. It is not intended to replace current assessment tools but to be used in addition.

This guide is intended to support practitioners in using the tool and answering frequently asked questions

Health Screening and Assessment Questions

These questions are designed to assess whether a client has contracted or is at high risk of contracting COVID-19 and if so, how to design service delivery so that practitioners are able to put in place safety measures – for example changing the mode of service delivery to telephone or video conferencing (where available). This should be fully documented on the Risk Assessment Form and where a client has contracted COVID-19 an incident report in Riskman should be completed as per Reporting Requirements relating to COVID-19 Procedure.

In addition, practitioners should discuss with the client what other supports may be available and make appropriate referrals where the client has given consent.

Family Safety and Wellbeing Questions

There is research that suggests that the risk of domestic and family violence, child abuse and mental health issues can increase in times of crisis. With COVID-19 the closure of schools, workplaces and other services the risk of abuse can as victims are inside homes with their abusers almost all day, everyday and there is less opportunity to reach out for support.

For clients with mental health issues the isolation, fear and loneliness can exacerbate existing mental health concerns and increase the risk of self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.

Practitioners in our services need to be aware of this risk and conduct safety assessments when assessing the mode of service delivery with our clients and making appropriate referrals to support clients.

Where risks are identified practitioners should develop a safety plan and ensure safe contact is maintained.

What do I do with the Risk Assessment Document?

The risk assessment is to be used to inform and support your practice with your clients during this challenging time. Like all client documents the information should be contained in client files in the format that is currently used in your service (electronic, Carelink or paper file).

Ensuring Privacy is protected.

Information about COVID-19 is health information and as such is considered as "sensitive information" under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). As an organisation bound by the Australian Privacy Principles we are unable to collect sensitive information unless the following applies:

- The client has consented to us collecting this information and
- The information is reasonably necessary for the our functions or activities.

Prior to collecting this information the practitioner/intake officer must advise the following:

- That we are collecting information about COVID-19 so that we can provide a safe service to our clients;
- We will only share this information with their consent or if required by law or a court order
- We keep this information secure and only allow access to those who need it which may include supervisors and managers, administrative staff and risk teams.
- The sharing of non-identifying information may occur with relevant government departments so they can understand what needs are required by the community. Your name or any other data that identifies you will not be shared.

Then ask the client to verbally consent such as "I understand this information and consent to you collecting and storing this information"
Indicate on the form that you have the client's verbal consent and put the date and time noted.

What happens if the client does not consent to the collection of information?

If the client does not consent to collection of this information you are unable to collect and store it in the usual manner. Advise the client that means that you may have to consider only telephone or video appointments until it is safe to renew face to face appointments.
Discuss the options with your Manager or contact the Practice Improvement Advisor for your region or by email to the practice_and_quality@uccommunity.org.au for further advice.