

22 September 2020

Tip sheet 4:

Caring for yourself during COVID-19

It's OK to not feel OK – these are not normal times! It is reasonable to be experiencing all sorts of emotions while working and caring in the middle of a pandemic that poses risks to us all. Even though it's hard to do, it's OK to ask for help for yourself. **Care for yourself first** so you can provide better care for others.

Feeling worried, anxious, sad, stressed, out of control, angry, numb or worn out are all normal reactions to the current situation we find ourselves in.

The important thing is to recognise how you are feeling and to reach out for help to deal with your feelings and stress.

Who to contact for help

If your regular working arrangements have changed due to COVID-19

The government has provided new funding for aged care workers whose regular working arrangements have changed as a result of single site arrangements.

- ✓ These workers can get up to **five free counselling sessions** per person **from Converge International**.

Services include employee and manager support, career guidance, financial counselling and family support. These services are **available till 10 November 2020**.

- ✓ Phone **1800 687 327** (free call) or visit [Converge International](#) to book an appointment. Please state that you are from the "VIC Residential Aged Care Workforce" when booking.

Employee Assistance Programs

Many employers offer a confidential employee assistance program for their staff. Check and see if your employer has one. EAPs usually offer a limited number of free counselling sessions for employees.

We acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



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Free services that you can contact yourself – no GP referral required

CAREinMIND™ - Wellbeing Support Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A free telephone/online counselling service for people who live or work within the north, western or central Melbourne region. ✓ Provides up to 3 counselling sessions plus an initial intake session and a follow up session if required. ✓ Call 1300 096 269 or visit www.careinmind.com.au
HeadtoHelp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A new service available to anyone in the community with or without a GP mental health care plan. ✓ Call 1800 595 212 to speak to a trained professional who will take your call, give you advice, and if you need it, connect you to a free HeadtoHelp hub or help you find the support that suits your needs. ✓ Hubs are in locations across NWMPHN (Broadmeadows, Wyndham Vale and Brunswick East) Visit HeadtoHelp.org.au
Swinburne University Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Offers a free confidential telehealth counselling and support service for residents and staff of residential aged care facilities and family members of residents. ✓ The service is delivered by postgraduate students studying psychology, counselling or social work. ✓ Contact the clinic using the Online Referral Form
Beyond Blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Beyond Blue has a Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service. ✓ Call 1800 512 348 or you can chat to a trained counsellor online. For further information see Beyond Blue Coronavirus information

If you need a bit more support or support for longer

Your General Practitioner (GP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If you need more support, your GP can work with you to develop a Mental Health Care Plan for you and refer you for up to 10 Medicare-subsidised sessions with a mental health professional (such as a psychologist) ✓ An additional 10 Medicare subsidised sessions are available for people subjected to further restrictions in areas impacted by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most mental health professionals charge an additional gap payment on top of the Medicare rebate.
CAREinMIND™	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A free mental health service for people of all ages who are unable to afford (or are ineligible for) other local services and who live in the north, west and central Melbourne area. ✓ A referral from a GP, or psychiatrist is required. ✓ The service is delivered by experienced qualified mental health professionals and may be delivered face to face or via telehealth. ✓ Visit CAREinMIND mental health services

Other ways of getting support

Private health insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ If you have private health insurance extras cover, you may be able to receive a rebate from your fund for sessions with a psychologist.✓ It is worth checking with your fund and finding out what is covered by your policy.
Online resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ There are many good online resources available although it can be a bit overwhelming to sift through them all.✓ Ask your GP or mental health professional for their recommendations.✓ Some that you might wish to try out for yourself:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Beyond Blue○ Head to Health – Department of Health website to find the right digital mental health resources for your needs○ Black Dog Institute Coronavirus: Resources for Anxiety and Stress○ Smiling Mind – also has a free App which can be downloaded onto your phone

Support for aged care providers

A Support Hub is available for Victorian aged care providers. [The Guiding Principles Support Hub](#) by ACSA and LASA is available online or by phoning 1800 491 793 (free call).

About North Western Melbourne PHN

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network was established by the Australian Government to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services, reduce fragmentation of care and improve health outcomes for everyone, especially for the most vulnerable. Australia is divided into 31 PHNs. NWMPHN is the biggest of Victoria's six primary health networks with a catchment of about 1.7 million people covering highly diverse communities from Melbourne's CBD and inner city to the rapidly growing suburbs in the north and west. Visit our website nwmpnh.org.au

Before you go, if you would like to contribute your tips and tricks to help others in residential aged care facilities please contact primarycare@nwmpnh.org.au

Also consider subscribing to our [COVID-19 e-bulletins for general practices](#) which will help keep you on top of the rapidly changing situation. If you need further help, email primarycare@nwmpnh.org.au

All the tips sheets for residential aged care facilities are available on the [COVID-19 aged care support page](#) on our website.