

Youth Justice Group Conferencing

COVID-19 Response Fact Sheet

The following fact sheet gives key information to assist service provision in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important that Community Service Organisations (CSOs) put in place measures to contain and minimise the transmission of COVID-19 and keep the workforce as safe as possible, while continuing to support young people. To do this, YJGC providers should implement some safety procedures as well as prioritise the delivery of group conferences for young people in custody.

Considerations for service provision

Safe working practices

CSOs are encouraged to refer to the information on the Victorian Council of Social Service's (VCOSS) website for detailed guidance on safe practices: <https://vcoss.org.au/analysis/covid19/>.

In particular, CSOs should refer to the risk assessment checklist and PPE guidance available at: <https://vcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Client-Risk-Assessment-Checklist-and-PPE-Guidance.pdf>. This resource provides guidance on protective measures for staff, a risk assessment checklist for screening young people and families, and the correct use of PPE.

Service reception processes

If your organisation determines that young people and their families should not attend office locations and have decided to close reception services, clear signage should be placed on entrance doors and within reception areas. Signs should include clear instructions for contacting reception and/or relevant staff contact details.

Remote working arrangements

Where possible YJGC staff should work from home and conduct appointments remotely. Consideration should be given to how technology can be used to support staff working remotely and be used in place of face-to-face conference preparation and participation.

Consideration should be given to how to support a child or other participant with responsivity factors (eg. disability, language barriers etc.) to effectively participate in a conference. YJGC convenors should explore accessing interpreters and other supports if needed.

YJ brokerage is available to assist young people and their families to connect with staff remotely through the use of technology. You will also receive a small grant to support connectivity with young people. You should work with YJ case managers on these needs.

Notification of reduced capacity

In the event that organisations experience reduced capacity to deliver services due to staff shortages or enactment of remote working arrangements, service providers should advise their regional YJ General Manager.

Prioritisation of group conferences

YJGC for young people currently in custody

Conferences for young people in custody should be prioritised, with YJGC providers working proactively to enable the attendance of participants via video conferencing where this is appropriate and possible.

All precautions and health advice should be followed including:

- using screening questions
- minimising the number of participants
- use of technology for some participants
- appropriately spacing participants and
- implementing hygiene and cleaning measures to minimise the risk of infection to all participants.

YJGC for young people in the community

New referrals:

Providers can continue to take new referrals with conferences continuing where possible. YJ will request that the court defer the conference for the maximum deferral period of four months while keeping the young person in the community. This will allow more time undertake necessary planning.

YJGC service providers can request a further deferral period if required, prior to the expiry of the initial period of deferral.

Existing referrals:

Conferences should continue where mandatory participants are willing to proceed (either face-to-face or via video conferencing/telephone). All precautions and health advice should be followed. YJGC service providers can request a further deferral period if required, prior to the expiry of the initial period of deferral.