

Tuesday 31 March 2020

A message for current contracted health care providers

RE: Procurement opportunities, contract deliverables and telehealth services during COVID-19 pandemic

EMPHN would like to acknowledge the difficult circumstances that you are all operating under at this present time. We would like to assure you that our funding from the Department of Health is secure until 2022. As such, we will continue to commission the required health services to support the needs of consumers in our community. Please refer to the EMPHN website and e-Procure for funding opportunities.

The Department of Health has advised that where services are compromised by COVID 19 that the Department will support flexibility in the delivery of planned services to enable PHNs and contracted service providers to adapt to the changing environment (e.g. telehealth via work from home measures). Where service providers have concerns for “at risk” consumers then appropriate measures should be taken to ensure a duty of care to those consumers i.e. follow up measures or linking them to an alternative service.

Telehealth

To reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 within the community, the Department of Health has expanded COVID 19 MBS telehealth items.

Key points:

- available for telephone or video conferencing via Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Duo, GoToMeeting and others
- available to General Practitioners; Specialists (Psychiatrists and Surgeons among others); Nurses; Psychologists; Social workers; Midwives; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners; and Other Medical Practitioners
- must be bulk billed
- available until 30 September 2020
- all Medicare eligible Australians can now receive these services.

More information:

- For providers [COVID-19 Telehealth Fact Sheets](#) and [MBS online](#)
- For consumers and carers [COVID-19 Telehealth Consumer Fact Sheet](#)
- Visit [EMPHN's website](#) for other telehealth resources.

Honouring provider contracts

Additionally, EMPHN will support our current contracted providers through this extremely challenging period and are looking at ways to continue to honour contracts with commissioned

suppliers where KPIs are directly impacted by COVID-19. If this situation occurs EMPHN will work with you to look at other activities that can be undertaken to support services in the future e.g. development of clinical governance frameworks, alternative models of care, training etc. To do this we require providers to communicate with us early on the impact to contracted services. EMPHN staff will continue to make contact in relation to changes in service delivery. Please ensure you complete an "Other business in-depth report" where required, as indicated in communication on March 16th 2020 and return to the nominated person at EMPHN. If you require support with this or have any questions, please contact your respective contract manager.

We are also seeking legal advice on extending current contracts that are coming to the end of their term through a simple "letter of extension" to ease the contractual administrative burden on healthcare providers. We will work through each contract and determine how to streamline this process on a case by case basis.

As this is a rapidly changing environment we will continue to communicate with the Department of Health and our providers to ensure we are providing flexible and supportive approaches throughout this period. If you have any queries please contact your EMPHN contract manager.

We encourage you to read the available information via our bulletins and website which is updated on a regular basis.