



23 February 2021

Direction on return to Face-to-Face Service Delivery

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the department) considers that, with signs of economic recovery, businesses hiring staff and COVID-19 restrictions continuing to ease across Australia, it is appropriate to commence the return to normal servicing arrangements for job seekers.

Accordingly, the department directs that, with effect from **9 March 2021**, Participant opt-in requirements cease and Providers **must** deliver Services face-to-face where this is required by the Deed and consistent with relevant health advice.

This new direction cancels the direction issued on 18 September 2020, which had permitted Providers to deliver Services, including all Activities (including Work for the Dole) face-to-face, provided that several conditions were met, including that Participants must opt-in to participate in the Services face-to-face.

Subject to the below conditions and qualifications, the department now directs that:

- (a) the Provider must ensure that face-to-face delivery is carried out in a safe manner and is appropriate for the relevant Participant, the Provider's staff and others from a work health and safety perspective. In this regard, the Provider must:
 - (i) consult guidance and information published by Safe Work Australia and the relevant work health and safety regulator;
 - (ii) have a COVID-Safe plan, in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each of the Sites where face-to-face delivery will be provided;
 - (iii) ensure that face-to-face Services are delivered in accordance with the Provider's relevant COVID-Safe plan;
 - (iv) ensure that each relevant Activity Host Organisation or Host Organisation has a COVID-Safe plan (or similar), in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each Activity which involves face-to-face participation prior to the Provider placing a Participant into that Activity; and
 - (v) continue to deliver non face-to-face servicing for participants who are unable to meet the minimum COVID-Safe requirements set by each State or Territory Government.
- (b) where face-to-face delivery is **partially restricted** by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, Providers must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.
- (c) where face-to-face delivery is **entirely prevented** by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, non- face-to-face services may be delivered until the relevant requirement is revoked, and for four weeks after the revocation date for non-face-to-face activities booked during the restriction period.

- (d) to the extent that face-to-face service delivery is restricted or prevented by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, the department:
- (i) waives obligations to deliver Services face-to-face; and
 - (ii) agrees to the Provider using alternative means to deliver the relevant Services, including by phone, video and/or online.
- (e) as part of a transition period, Activities (including courses where relevant) that have been arranged on or before the date of this direction to be delivered in a non face-to-face format, *and* scheduled to commence prior to 30 April 2021, may be still be delivered in a non face-to-face format. Where a currently scheduled Activity is to commence after 30 April 2021, providers must conduct these activities face-to-face and advise participants accordingly.
- (f) If face-to-face delivery is impacted in the future by local events such as natural disasters or the requirements of Commonwealth, State or Territory governments or local authorities, the Provider may to seek agreement from the department to alter service delivery arrangements for the period of the relevant local event.

Further advice on the application of this direction in relation to specific programs is available on the Provider Portal.

For more information on your local COVID-19 advice, safe practices and workplace principles, please refer to www.australia.gov.au, www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au, and your relevant State or Territory health authority information.

Links to enforceable government health and emergency directions and COVID Safe plans is available at: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/other-resources/covid-19-public-health-directions-and-covidsafe>