

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION (COVID-19)

Family Violence Programme Provider Code of Practice

Provider and Community Services
Ministry of Justice
March 2020



FV PROGRAMME DELIVERY GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

This document is to be used to supplement Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the Family Violence Programme Provider Code of Practice. It provides guidance for providers delivering Ministry of Justice family violence programmes during the 2020 COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak and is the primary reference document until notified otherwise.

1. Key messages for Family Violence Programme providers

Follow the government advice on [Covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz)

All business and service delivery decisions must be in line with the current Ministry of Health and government directions.

Follow the principles and overarching guidance of the Family Violence Programme Provider Code of Practice (the Code)

The Code provides overall principles and guidance for safe programme delivery and covers the primary objectives for all programmes.

The design and service delivery of any non-violence programme must meet the primary objective of stopping or preventing family violence by the client. Safety programmes must have the primary objective of promoting (whether by education, information, support, or otherwise) the protection of the protected person from family violence.

These principles, rather than the detail of programme delivery, take priority during the COVID-19 outbreak, as there may be situations where following the Code will not be possible, practical or safe. The Ministry trusts providers to use their professional discretion and to use safe and appropriate alternatives to ensure clients still have access to services and support.

Providers should be flexible in programme delivery

The COVID-19 outbreak will affect the delivery of services in a variety of ways. In order to reduce the risk to staff, clients, and the general public the Ministry encourages providers to use flexible and creative ways of delivering family violence services. This includes using remote technology, alternative venues, shorter sessions and focusing on risk assessment and holistic safety planning.

Non-violence programme providers will be notified of changes to the referral process which will affect the process for initial engagement and assessments.

Responding to safety and risk remains key to all work

The Ministry recognises that many families are at risk of increased family violence with housing restrictions, cohabitation and the pressures of dealing with COVID-19 in the community.

Safety notifications and reporting non-compliance must continue. Providers will need to maintain up to date information about relevant support and crisis services for clients.

All client work must be clearly documented in client files

Providers must document all client contact and any change in delivery mode or site. Files should 'tell the story' of how the service is meeting risk and safety needs.

Payment rules for programmes

The standard payment rules and restrictions outlined in the Code of Practice do not apply during this time (eg normally, only two non-attendance payments can be invoiced for per individual programme). Providers will receive separate information regarding funding and contracts.

Your contract manager is here to help and support you

We understand that this is a unique situation and that additional flexibility and support will be required to ensure clients continue to receive services they need. The Safety Services team are here to answer any questions or concerns that you have.

You can contact your contract manager, or you can contact the Safety Services team at DVReporting@justice.govt.nz

For further information and resources on delivering family violence services during the COVID-19 outbreak, visit New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse website or follow this link: <https://nzfvc.org.nz/news/issues-and-resources-covid-19-family-violence-and-related-services>

2. Flexible Programme Guidance

Providers should use a flexible and pragmatic approach to service delivery that maximises safety for all, while also maintaining offender accountability.

During the COVID-19 outbreak the Ministry will allow and encourage providers to use their discretion to make changes to the way services are delivered in order to maximise the safety of staff, clients and the general public.

Safety must always be the priority and offenders must continue to be held to account for their use of family violence.

Flexibility will include using remote technology, alternative venues, shorter sessions and focusing on risk assessment and holistic safety planning.

Vigilance in assessing who is in the home and how families are coping will be essential, especially when contact may be only by phone, text or web-based applications.

2.1 Venues and using remote technology

All Programmes

In situations where clients are unable to attend assessment or programme sessions face to face due to COVID-19 related reasons (eg self-isolation, restricted travel), remote technology can be used. This includes telephone calls and video calls (eg Skype) and applies to all non-violence programmes, safety programmes and the strengthening safety service (SSS). Where appropriate, session and worksheets can be emailed, posted or a secure neutral drop off can be organised (eg put in mailbox).

DV programmes do not need to be notified if you have moved to remote sessions. This will be detailed on your completion reports.

Non-Violence Programmes

For safety reasons, non-violence programmes are still prohibited to be delivered face-to-face in the client's home.

If you are unable to deliver assessments and programmes from your approved venue(s) or via remote technology, you can use an alternative venue and do not have to seek approval. If you choose to use a non-approved venue (eg you are sharing an alternative office space) you must assess and consider the potential risks.

Clients do not need to sign the assessment outcome (FVPP02A), but it must still be completed and sent to DVProgrammes with details about the mode of delivery and agreements on sessions.

If a programme is being delivered in a prison and that prison has suspended access to visitors and contractors, facilitators should complete a FVPP03 deferring the programme and note the reason under section 3.

Safety Programmes (Adult Safety, Children's Safety and SSS)

Providers must ensure contact with safety clients' factors in the risk of respondents being present during calls or remote technology contact. Tips on safe use of technology can be found on netsafe.org.nz

Safety programmes can continue to be delivered in the client's home or at an off-site location where possible. The usual risk-assessment and safety precautions will continue to apply.

2.2 Mode of delivery – How you can structure your programmes

All Programmes

Changes to programme type, hours and end date

As things are changing rapidly, we expect clients' needs and availability to also change. This may mean that a client's programme type, hours and/or end date may differ to what was initially requested. If this is the case, you **do not** need to submit an FVPP06 or FVPP10 to request a change to the client's programme.

You must record any changes to the programme and the rationale in the clients file.

Changes may include:

- changes from a group programme to an individual programme
- a reduction or increase in programme hours
- a reduction or increase to the number of weeks for a programme to be completed which will affect the expected end date
- changes to the number of sessions (eg 20 x 30-minute calls rather than 10 one hour sessions)
- extension of programme hours for at risk clients – where needed you can continue past the standard hours of delivery if ongoing contact will minimise risk of harm to self or others.

Once the programme is completed, note any changes to the programme and the rationale on the FVPP05 or FVPP09 Programme Completion Report.

Length of sessions

All assessment sessions and programme sessions can be delivered in 15 minute blocks. This means that one session may be a 15-minute phone call with a client to check in on their current situation, assess their risk and talk through potential safety management measures.

Non-Violence Programmes

Changes to programme sessions

If changes to an appointment are required, the client must provide you with confirmation that they understand the date, time and venue of the new appointment. Confirmation may be in the form of a text, email or documented phone conversation.

Excusals, postponements and failure to attend

Facilitators should allow clients excusals and postponements for COVID-19 related reasons including illness, self-isolation and childcare. COVID-19 related excusals and postponements do not require a medical certificate.

If a client does not attend the agreed appointment without reasonable excuse, then you must submit an FVPP04 Notice of Non-compliance.

2.3 Programme content

All Programmes

All assessments and programme sessions should focus on assessment of risk and holistic safety planning in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Facilitators should provide clients with the support they need to maximise their safety and minimise risk. This may mean that usual programme content is replaced with more practical and holistic support.

Non-Violence Programmes

The design and service delivery of any non-violence programme must meet the primary objective of stopping or preventing family violence by the client.

Safety Programmes (Adult Safety, Children's Safety and SSS)

Safety programmes must have the primary objective of promoting (whether by education, information, support, or otherwise) the protection of the protected person from family violence.

Many sessions for children's safety programmes may need to be solely with the applicant or caregiver and not with the child. This is likely to happen where the programme is required to be delivered remotely. In these cases, facilitators should focus on safety and providing the caregiver with tools to help the child cope.

2.4 Temporary approval of facilitators

In the situation where providers are short staffed and unable to meet service demands, managers can approve other staff members to be temporary facilitators of Ministry of Justice assessments and/or programmes.

Managers may choose to approve existing staff who have the skills to deliver modified services (eg advocates). Managers must use their discretion to determine whether a staff member has the skills to deliver the required service.

People who are not currently employed at the agency must have recently had a police vet and have a contract in place.