



## COVID-19 FAQs: Level 3 & 4

Is occupational therapy/whakaora ngangahau an essential service?

Yes. Occupational therapists/kaiwhakaora ngangahau work in all areas specified by the Ministry of Health [as essential to the health and disability system](#). Provision of essential service needs to occur via telehealth in the first instance.

How can I fulfil my responsibilities as a health practitioner and partner of Te Tiriti o Waitangi during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Tangata Whenua have suffered huge loss of life from introduced disease and pandemics. Whether you are Tangata Whenua or Tangata Tiriti you have a responsibility under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the occupational therapy/whakaora ngangahau specific [Competencies for Registration and continuing practice](#) to help prevent this happening again. Tangata Whenua whānau need to have access to high quality, safe and culturally appropriate healthcare to ensure underlying conditions and social risk factors are mitigated as much as possible. If it is what your client needs and wants, partner and support tribal authorities, iwi and kāupapa Māori health services who are doing this work. If you are a trusted health practitioner involved with a whānau ensure adequate and sustained healthcare is being provided for them.

- [Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā](#), the National Māori Pandemic Group has an extensive website for the Māori workforce and whānau with advice about tikanga such as tangihanga and manging chronic health conditions.
- [COVID-19 Health and Disability System Response Plan](#) has specific section addressing responsibilities as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partner
- [COVID-19 and Māori health – when equity is more than a word](#) is a short article published on 10 April 2020 on the Public Health Expert blog by the University of Otago

Can I carry out healthcare tasks and roles which are normally outside the scope of occupational therapy practice?

Yes. There are provisions in the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003) which enable registered health practitioners to work outside their scope of practice in emergency situations such as a pandemic. If you are working outside the occupational therapy/whakaora ngangahau scope of practice you must ensure you have been trained, are competent and have access to clinical supervision and support from an appropriately qualified person to carry out the tasks or roles involved.

Can I help with COVID-19 if I do not hold a practising certificate?

You may be eligible to apply for a temporary practising certificate under the [Special Purpose Scope of Practice - Response to COVID-19](#) established by OTBNZ

Can I help the health system manage COVID-19 if I cannot work as an essential worker?

Yes. If you cannot work in your ordinary duties and you are available to support the health workforce you can [join the COVID-19 surge workforce](#) through a registration process on the Ministry of Health website.

Can I help with identification of COVID-19 and contact tracing?

You may be able to. [Register your interest](#) on the Ministry of Health website. There is also additional information about [case definitions](#) and [advice for all health professionals](#) to complete for suspected cases.

Who should I prioritise to ensure higher risk factors for COVID-19 are mitigated?

The [COVID-19 Health and Disability System Response Plan](#) states (p.12) these populations are the priority for proactive response by the health system:

- Tangata Whenua
- Pacific peoples in New Zealand
- Older people, especially those over 70 years
- People with long-term conditions
- People with disabilities
- People with mental health conditions
- People living in residential facilities (e.g., aged residential care facilities, hostels, university accommodation or Department of Corrections facilities)
- Refugees and migrant community members

When should I provide telehealth?

You should provide telehealth in the first instance for all referrals and ongoing service delivery until the Ministry of Health has lifted physical distancing restrictions.

How do I provide safe telehealth?

There are several places to get information and guidance about best practice of telehealth.

- The MoH has provided guidance [for using telehealth and online tools](#).
- OTBNZ has formal guidelines for the use of [telehealth](#) and [social media and electronic communication](#) and [tips for using Zoom](#) video conferencing safely.
- [Enable NZ](#) has provided guidance relevant to provision of assistive technologies and housing.
- Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand has a [telehealth best practice guide](#)

As a health care worker, what is my risk of catching COVID-19?

The risk of catching COVID-19 from a confirmed case largely depends on the patient and how you are caring for them. COVID-19 transmission is similar to that of the influenza virus and it is recommended that standard droplet and contact precautions are used when managing patients with suspect COVID-19 infection and those with respiratory and influenza-like illness. Standard droplet and contact precautions include:

- Gloves
- Surgical face mask

- Disposable, fluid resistant gown
- Eye protection.
- Regular hand hygiene is important.

The risk is higher when performing aerosol-generating procedures, and the PPE is slightly different when performing these procedures (see [information on aerosol-generating procedures](#)). It is not recommended that aerosol-generating procedures are undertaken in primary care. For more advice on PPE, see [PPE use in health care](#).

When should I consider providing community based face to face contact?

Face-to-face contact should only be provided if it meets certain criteria. Health care workers are a high risk of spreading COVID-19 and of contracting it themselves. OTBNZ has developed a [decision making tree](#) for providing face to face contact in level 3 and 4.

Do I have to provide face-to-face services?

No. If you have concerns about your own health or the health of your whānau bubble you need to discuss this with your employer and make arrangements of what you can safely provide. If this arrangement is not sustainable there may be other ways you can access paid employment by [joining the COVID-19 surge workforce](#).

Do I need to wear Personal Protective Equipment?

You may need to. Refer to the Ministry of Health resources below about when and how to use PPE.

- [PPE use in health and disability care settings](#)
- [Donning and doffing PPE safely](#)
- [Videos demonstrating hand washing and donning/doffing PPE](#)

Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui has also provided an excellent resource [Personal protective equipment \(PPE\): guidance for NGO community workers](#)

How do I access PPE?

PPE for New Zealand's publicly-funded health workers is ordered and distributed through a national approach to coordination managed by the Ministry of Health. The current guidance for the supply of PPE is outlined in a [table](#) on the ministry's website.

How do I keep community based clients safe when providing face to face services?

- Only visit if absolutely essential. Refer to the [OTBNZ guide](#) if considering face-to-face visits.
- Do not visit if you are unwell
- Practice the safe hygiene protocols
- Make sure you have read the [updated advice for health professionals](#) before visiting
- Explain to the people/whānau you are working with how you are keeping them safe and what they need to do to keep you safe

How do I clean my workplace to ensure it is safe?

The Ministry of Health has provided detailed instructions for [cleaning rooms, equipment and disposing of PPE](#)

Is there financial support available if I cannot carry out my usual business/service activities?

The [covid.govt.nz](#) website has detailed financial advice and links for [employers and businesses](#) and [individuals and households](#)

Can I advertise that I can provide essential health services?

It is important the public is not misled to believe you are providing routine healthcare. If you do advertise your availability for essential health services you must identify the strict requirements as to what this entails and the criteria and processes that need to be undertaken to do this. These processes must include a personally completed initial telehealth assessment by video (telephone ONLY when no other means is available) and continual use of telehealth as the primary mode of service delivery.

Should I expect my support staff to work when I provide essential services?

Minimising social contact with others is a key priority. If at all possible only you and the person you are working with should be present during face to face contact. It may be necessary and culturally appropriate for whānau, carers or guardians to also be present. When this occurs, maintain physical distancing and record who attended the appointment for any future contact tracing purposes.