



# Maternal and Child Health

## Short term changes to metropolitan service delivery due to COVID-19

### Information for parents

25 January 2022

**OFFICIAL**

#### Short term changes to metropolitan Maternal and Child Health service delivery due to COVID-19

Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, health services and health workforces in Victoria are experiencing significant workforce pressures that are compromising essential health service delivery.

In recognition of these extreme pressures, on 18 January 2022, a Pandemic Code Brown was announced across public health services in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria for a period of four to six weeks.

A system-wide, coordinated approach is considered necessary at this time to ensure that our most vulnerable new mothers/caregivers, infants and families are supported in the face of overwhelming demand on health services.

The Department of Health and the Municipal Association of Victoria has requested that maternity services and local government Maternal and Child Health services in metropolitan areas work together to prioritise the delivery of essential health services for new mothers/caregivers and newborns in both hospital and community-based settings.

This will ensure that healthcare for mothers/caregivers and their newborns continues to be delivered:

- in acute hospital maternity settings
- on discharge from hospital into the community
- through community-based follow up support through MCH services.

#### Prioritising metropolitan MCH services to vulnerable children and families

The temporary diversion of available MCH Nurses to support essential maternity service delivery, will impact MCH services in metropolitan areas and is expected to be in place from Friday 28 January until Friday 11 March 2022.

During this time, local government MCH services in metropolitan areas are temporarily prioritising essential services to the most vulnerable children and families including:

- infants aged 0-8 weeks and their mother/primary caregiver
- Aboriginal infants, children and families
- children and families with additional needs or concerns including families on the Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Program and those with COVID-19

This means that in metropolitan areas, some MCH service delivery and consultations will be temporarily paused for older infants, children and families with no additional needs or concerns.

This will allow prioritisation of MCH services for the youngest infants and children and based on the availability of fully qualified MCH Nurses.

All vulnerable children and families are still eligible for MCH appointments across Victoria.

Parents or caregivers with significant concerns about missed or delayed MCH appointments should contact their regular MCH service to access support.

Families are also encouraged to access the alternative supports listed below.

## Alternative supports

Some parents or families may have concerns about missing their next appointment because of changed MCH service delivery arrangements.

Families are encouraged to access alternative supports including:

- Contacting their regular MCH service if they have significant concerns and need their MCH consultation to proceed
- Call the [Maternal and Child Health Line](#) on **13 22 29**. The Line is staffed 24-hours, 7-days-a-week by qualified MCH Nurses and provides confidential support and advice about the care and health of your child (from birth to school age).
- Contacting their regular General Practitioner or other regular health professional
- Visiting a [SuperCare pharmacy](#) which provides 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access to healthcare advice and pharmacy services, including a free, on-site nursing service from 6-10pm each night.
- Contacting an Optometrist for vision testing
- Referring to Maternal and Child Health - Information for parents with young children at <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/maternal-and-child-health-services> for a list of additional supports

To receive this document in another format phone 1300 651 160 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email Maternal and Child Health and Parenting](#) <mch@health.vic.gov.au>.

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Available at: [health.vic - Maternal and Child Health Service](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/primary-and-community-health/maternal-child-health) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/primary-and-community-health/maternal-child-health>.