COVIDSafe application

Factsheet for IAHA members

On 26 April, the Commonwealth government released the COVIDSafe mobile application in an attempt to support contact tracing efforts by state and territory health departments.

Contact tracing is an important part of the public health response to COVID-19, assisting in the early identification of potential cases and limiting further spread of the disease. As the curve starts to flatter, the Commonwealth government have publicly linked uptake of the application with steps to ease other restrictions.

As members of the current and future health workforce, it is likely that you may be asked questions regarding the COVIDSafe application, or even encouraged to promote the app to clients and members of your community.

How does it work?

On signing up, individuals are asked to provide a name you choose to provide (which can be a pseudonym), your age range, your phone number and your postcode.

The app uses Bluetooth to recognise other devices with the COVIDSafe installed, noting the date, time, distance and duration of the contact and the other user's reference code.

The concept of the app is that, should a user be confirmed as a positive case, permission can be given to use the app to support contact tracing and to notify other users of their potential exposure and give advice on next steps.

Assurances from governments

In response to concerns, the government have made the source code for the app publicly available to scrutiny and have made several public assurances about the app.
This includes that:
- Deleting the COVIDSafe will delete all app information on a person's phone;
- Individual data is encrypted;
- The names of positive cases will not be shared by health officials in the contact tracing process;
- Data collection does not include geographic location data;
- The information collected and stored in the information storage system will be destroyed at the end of the pandemic (and ongoing data collection is stored for 21 days prior to deletion);

- Use of the app is restricted to health authorities for contact tracing only (although the Administrator will have access for functionality, integrity and security purposes); and
- The application cannot be used to enforce any laws (and in fact access for purposes outside of contact tracing has been criminalised).

Rollout issues

There have been some reports of efficacy issues in the rollout of the app, including that the application can be less effective when operating in the background on iPhones.

One concern which will be subject to further investigation is anecdotal reports that the application can interfere with Bluetooth-enabled Continuous Glucose Monitors. If any individual is concerned about interference from the app with other health related apps such as Continuous Glucose Monitors, the advice to now has been to uninstall the COVIDSafe app until further information is available.

Where can I download the COVIDSafe app?

To download the app, please click on the appropriate link below from your smartphone. For further information, please visit the Department of Health website.

Disclaimer: Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) provide this information in good faith to support the informed decision making of IAHA members. While IAHA do not take a particular stance on the COVIDSafe application, this may change should further information come to hand or circumstances change.

Make a Difference...
Be an allied health professional