

## Guidelines re: supporting people around a major event

### A major event could be:

- Public health concern (e.g. COVID 19 / flu epidemic / etc)
- Severe weather event (e.g. storms / wind alerts / etc)
- Animal diseases (e.g. foot and mouth)



People with an intellectual disability have a right to information, particularly if it directly impacts their day-to-day lives. How we approach this depends on the individual and the context.

-  It is not necessary to provide information about every detail of the situation if that information means nothing to the person, is not relevant to their day-to-day lives or is likely to cause undue anxiety.
-  It is often not necessary to explain “why” something is happening or give large amounts of background information to the event (unless the person asks) – generally information on how it is impacting on the person directly and what they will be expected to do is most appropriate.
-  Information can be provided in stages, as it impacts on the person’s day-to-day life. Providing information about what may potentially/possibly/maybe happen to the person can be anxiety provoking and result in misinterpretation of that information.

### What to consider for people with ID:



Check the person’s file - do they require Type 1, 2, 3, or 4 communication supports? This will inform the appropriate way to support them.



Has the person asked about the event? What have they asked? Are they primarily concerned about a favoured activity being cancelled rather than the event itself?



What information is appropriate to provide? Do they need to know every detail about the event or just how it will impact them in their daily lives?





Are staff / family / carers talking about the event and adding to the person's confusion / anxiety?



Do people have access to media coverage on the event and is this adding to their confusion / anxiety?



Please do not joke, engage in "banter" or use sarcasm in relation to the event. This can be taken literally by the person and cause undue anxiety and upset.



Will the event result in changes to their usual routine? Will this cause undue distress?



Will the event result in changes in staff? Will this cause undue distress?



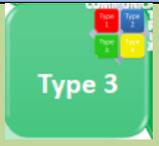
Will the person be required to engage in activities that cause them distress (e.g. expectation of wearing extra layers of clothing, changes in personal care regimes etc).



Does the person have a co-morbid mental health difficulty which will require specific mental health supports (e.g. anxiety, OCD, etc)



## How to assist a person based on their identified communication support needs:

 <p><b>Type 1</b></p>	<p>Person is aware of familiar routines only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific communication supports are required.</li> <li>• Maintain normal routines as much as possible.</li> <li>• Watch for signs of upset at changes in routines.</li> <li>• Staff/family/carers support the person in the usual manner.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Type 2</b></p>	<p>Person understands familiar routines and is aware when the routine changes.</p> <p>Person may experience frustration/anxiety at changes in routine.</p> <p>Person may experience distress when that change has not been appropriately communicated to them.</p> <p>Person may require support to manage secondary losses due to the event (e.g. it is the cancellation of a favoured activity that causes distress rather than the event itself).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain normal routines as much as possible.</li> <li>• Watch &amp; listen for signs of upset at changes in routines.</li> <li>• Provide visual supports to signal a change in routine (refer to the person's matrix sheet and PCSP for the appropriate visual)</li> <li>• Help the person make an alternative choice if their routine changes or something is cancelled.</li> <li>• Advocate for the person.</li> <li>• Do not communicate your emotions/opinions about the event etc to the person.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Type 3</b></p>	<p>Person is aware of time (e.g. days / months /etc) so will understand their schedule and any changes made to it.</p> <p>Person may experience frustration/anxiety at changes in routine.</p> <p>Person may experience distress when that change has not been appropriately communicated to them.</p> <p>Person is able to communicate their concern / frustration / distress to you.</p> <p>Person may require support to manage secondary losses due to the event (e.g. it is the cancellation of a favoured activity that causes distress rather than the event itself).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain normal routines as much as possible.</li> <li>• Provide visual information about the event (e.g. easy read).</li> <li>• Communicate the facts only – do not talk about what “possibly”, “maybe”, “might” happen.</li> <li>• Do not use jargon or terminology-heavy language.</li> <li>• Provide visual information about changes to their schedule (e.g. easy read information, visual schedules, etc)</li> <li>• Help the person make an alternative choice if their routine changes or something is cancelled.</li> <li>• Advocate for the person.</li> <li>• Do not communicate your emotions/opinions about the event etc to the person.</li> <li>• Do not expose the person to a constant stream of media coverage (e.g. TV, radio, etc)</li> </ul>



 <p>Type 4</p>	<p>Person may require support to manage anxiety about the event.</p> <p>Person may require support to contextualise the information (e.g. weather events that are being discussed in the media, but will impact a different part of the country).</p> <p>Person may require support to manage the volume of information they are being exposed to.</p> <p>Person may require support to manage changes to their usual routine and cancellation of planned activities.</p> <p>Person may require support to manage secondary losses due to the event (e.g. it is the cancellation of a favoured activity that causes distress rather than the event itself).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide visual information about the event (e.g. easy read, maps, etc). This will support retention of the information.</li> <li>• Communicate the facts only – do not talk about what “possibly”, “maybe”, “might” happen.</li> <li>• Do not use jargon or terminology-heavy language.</li> <li>• Inform the person about changes to their usual schedule.</li> <li>• Support the person to manage changes in their usual routine or to make alternative arrangements if something is cancelled.</li> <li>• Do not communicate your emotions/opinions about the event etc to the person.</li> <li>• Do not expose the person to a constant stream of media coverage (e.g. TV, radio, etc)</li> </ul>
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Please contact the Speech & Language Therapy Department if you require any assistance around specific communication supports.

