

Health experts launch global call to action to improve vaccine access for people living with mental health and addiction issues

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Health experts in Aotearoa NZ are part of an international alliance calling for urgent global action to remove barriers and prioritise access to vaccines for people living with mental health and addiction issues.

The *Global Call to Action* comes from the International Equally Well Alliance. It is supported by leading organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand and calls on organisations and individuals to show their support by [signing the declaration](#).

The facts

Worldwide, people living with mental health and addiction issues are twice as likely to be hospitalised, experience long-term effects, or die from COVID-19. Likewise, this group is at greater risk of contracting and dying from other preventable diseases like influenza, pneumonia, and tuberculosis, and less likely to be prioritised for vaccination.

About the International Equally Well Alliance

Equally Well is a collaboration focused on taking collective action to achieve physical health equity for people living with mental health and addiction by addressing systemic and service barriers to equity. The *Global Call to Action* is being led by [Equally Well Australia](#), [Equally Well Aotearoa New Zealand](#) and [Equally Well United Kingdom](#) along with alliance members in Europe, North America, and Asia.

The Equally Well Aotearoa New Zealand experience

Too many times tāngata whai ora*, and tāngata whai ora Māori particularly, are unseen in protective vaccine programmes despite having evidence of need.

“This is a global problem and collective action unites the world in finding solutions together,” says Dr Helen Lockett, Strategic Lead Equally Well Aotearoa.

“Action must be beyond a paper exercise and include practices that reach out and meet people where they are, ensuring we leave no one without the information and choices they need to live well,” says Dr Lockett.

Organisations supporting the call to action in Aotearoa

Join the following organisations in Aotearoa who are supporting this call to action - Atamira Platform Trust, Balance Aotearoa, Changing Minds, dapaanz (the Drug and Alcohol Practitioners' Association Aotearoa–New Zealand), DRIVE Consumer Direction, Mental

Health Foundation, Mind & Body, NZ Drug Foundation, NZ Needle Exchange Programme, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, and Te Pou.

Contact

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*Tāngata whai ora is a phrase in te reo Māori that can be translated to “people seeking wellness”. It is commonly used as a strength-based alternative for people living with mental health and addiction issues. For more information on te reo Māori alternatives to conventional medical terminology, please visit www.tereohapai.nz.