

LETTER TO FAMILIES



May 31, 2022

Dear DDDS Families and Service Recipients,

As we move into seasonal celebrations of proms, graduations and weddings, I hope your family is doing well and has opportunities to celebrate these milestones. The weather has been typical for Delaware with wild swings in temperature, but we did manage to have picture perfect weather at the Tree Dedication Ceremony on May 17<sup>th</sup>. It was so nice to see so many families and service recipients attend the event commemorating the collective pandemic experience, along with DDDS employees and provider agencies. If you did not have a chance to attend the event or watch it on Facebook Live, you can watch it at <https://tinyurl.com/DDDSTreeDedication>

COVID-19 Cases

As the state has seen an increase in new cases, the same is true for our DDDS network. Since April 29<sup>th</sup>, we have had 56 Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) test positive, bringing the total cases to 1207. There have been 33 additional cases among service recipients supported in residential habilitation as well, bringing the total to 582. I know many of our families who have their loved one live at home have also seen positive test results.

Operational Updates

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends indoor masking in areas where there is a high level of community transmission. Currently all three counties in Delaware are in the high level. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) will continue to be masking through the month of June. Additionally, anyone who interacts in-person with a service recipient continues to be required to wear a face mask.

*DDDS provider agencies are allowed to require masking of anyone who is able to wear a mask, during this time of high COVID cases.* For those who struggle to wear a mask, additional strategies, like increased social distancing may be implemented. Increased social distancing in vehicles or reducing the number of occupants are also acceptable strategies during this surge time. We have to do what is necessary to reduce the spread of the virus.

Testing and Vaccination Updates

As we've seen in this latest surge, being fully vaccinated and boosted greatly reduces the severity of symptoms when someone does get infected with COVID-19. Please remember, individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities are approved to receive two booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If you have any questions about the vaccine, please consult with your health care provider.

Vaccines and booster doses continue to be readily available throughout the state. Find information and locations at [www.de.gov/getmyvaccine](http://www.de.gov/getmyvaccine)

Free at home tests are also available through the federal government's program, at your local public libraries as well as at many community events. To find testing locations around Delaware, visit [www.de.gov/gettested](http://www.de.gov/gettested)

### *Planning for the Future*

Even though we are still battling the pandemic, across the state we continue to plan for the day when the public health emergency is officially behind us. As a reminder, the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA) will restart eligibility reviews. In order to avoid any disruption in services, DMMA is asking all beneficiaries to update their contact information, if it has changed. You can do this by calling DHSS' Change Report Center at 302-571-4900 option 2 or via Delaware ASSIST at <https://assist.dhss.delaware.gov> By ensuring your contact information is accurate, you will be notified of any eligibility documentation that may be necessary to keep your benefits active.

As always, thank you for your continued collaboration during these 27 months. I've said it many times, but we are truly getting through this together. I appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to help everyone live their good lives safely.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cory Ellen Nourie, MSS, MLSP". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Cory Ellen Nourie, MSS, MLSP  
Director of Community Services