



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICES

May 28, 2020

Dear DDDS Families,

Thank you for all you're doing to help ensure the health and safety of your families during these difficult times. As you can imagine, I am working to stay up to date on all of the changing guidance from the Governor's office as well as from the Delaware Division of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control. I appreciate your patience as we work through methodical, intentional changes, which will impact the health and safety of the nearly 5,000 Delawareans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism and Prader Willi who are supported through DDDS.

DDDS is working with providers of residential habilitation to modify the restrictions on visitors that have been in place consistent with the Governor's Phase 1 re-opening and the removal of the stay-at-home orders for the general population effective June 1st. This will be a phased-in approach to lifting the visitor restriction and comes along with certain parameters. The guidelines are listed below, but please understand that, in determining how to keep all residents healthy and safe, each provider must take multiple considerations into account for each service recipient. Clear communication with your loved one's provider is essential to ensure the health and safety of everyone.

For any home where there is a COVID-19 positive person or there is any resident who falls into the CDC's "vulnerable person" category, based on their age or underlying medical condition, the current visitor restrictions will remain in effect. This is to protect the health and safety of the service recipients.

The first phase will be effective June 1st. During this phase, in homes where visitor restrictions can be eased, providers will work with families to arrange for visits with their loved one in an outside, open air environment such as the front porch or yard of the home where your loved one lives or a park. Transportation to the meeting place, when necessary, will be provided by the provider. In order to minimize risk for all parties, the following rules must be adhered to:

- The service recipient must be in good health to attend. The provider will continue to monitor for any symptoms of COVID, and if any symptom is present, the visit will be rescheduled.
- Family members should be limited in number. We know everyone misses their loved ones, but we need to limit the potential exposure, so we ask that the family members visiting are limited to a very few. Family members must not attend a visit if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 at all. Family members must take their temperature immediately before the visit. If there is a fever over 100.4 degrees, please reschedule for another time.
- Family members must wear a facemask/face covering the entire duration of the visit. Ideally the service recipient will wear a facemask too, but we understand that may not be possible. Therefore, it is imperative that family members wear facemasks, to contain their respiratory droplets. According to the CDC, this is the primary method of transmission of the virus. Some states are requiring family members to wear gloves and other protective equipment. We have chosen not to require that.
- Families should try to maintain social distance between their loved one and themselves as much as possible. We know that a hug may happen, especially after such a long time apart, but please try to keep physical contact to a minimum. Other states have put a time limit on how long a hug can last. We do not want to do that but ask that the physical contact be at a minimum, to protect your loved one, the other people with whom they live and their direct support professionals.

- Visits should be a few hours at maximum. Providers will work with you to determine the best times for the visit. Limiting the length of the visit helps ensure everyone is staying vigilant and “in the moment” with the safety protocols.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available and used throughout the visit and immediately afterwards.

This is just the first phase of visiting guidelines; my intention is to implement phase two as soon as possible, which will allow even more visiting opportunities. Easing the restrictions and monitoring the health of all service recipients must be done in a very methodical way, since the potential exposure and impact is so large. Providers have the discretion to modify these guidelines as necessary, depending on each unique situation.

If phase one of the visiting protocol demonstrates that there is an increase in the number of people diagnosed with COVID-19 in our provider-managed settings, we will move back to full visitor restrictions. A way to help ensure this does not happen is by being vigilant about hand washing, monitoring symptoms, and continuing to social distance and stay home as much as possible. As the state re-opens, please use caution to limit your exposure to other people which, in turn, will help limit the exposure for all DDDS service recipients supported in a provider-managed setting.

As the state re-opens on June 1st, I expect to learn a lot about how COVID-19 is continuing to impact Delawareans and how that impacts DDDS’ services. I invite you to the second DDDS Family Virtual Town Hall on Saturday June 6th from 10-10:30am via Zoom, to hear where we are and our plans going forward. I will be joined by DDDS’ Manager of Family Engagement Jennifer Tozer and The Columbus Organization’s State Executive Director Shenika Kirby. We will answer questions entered via the Q&A box or that are sent in advance to Jennifer.tozer@delaware.gov. The link and call-in information is:

<https://dds.zoom.us/j/96248124280>

or call 877 853 5247 (Toll Free) or 888 788 0099 (Toll Free)

Webinar ID: 962 4812 4280

I want to thank you again for your patience and understanding during these difficult times. COVID-19 has become common language which none of us anticipated a year or six months ago. The way families, our providers and DDDS have all adapted to these changes is laudable. Thank you for working with us. To reiterate, all DDDS’ employees and Columbus Organization’s employees are all still working. If your loved one lives in a provider managed setting, please reach out to his/her Support Coordinator for any needs. If your loved one lives at home or on their own, please reach out to his/her Columbus Organization Community Navigator to discuss any needs. If your loved one is enrolled in Diamond State Health Plan Plus (also referred to as LTSS), please reach out to his/her Care Coordinator through their Managed Care Organization (Highmark Health Options or Amerihealth Caritas) to discuss any medical needs or the DDDS Family Resource Coordination Unit to discuss any issues regarding DDDS day services.

Be well,

 MSS, MLSP

Cory Ellen Nourie, MSS, MLSP
Director of Community Services