



**DELAWARE HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

DIVISION OF
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Letter to DDDS families regarding COVID-19

March 19, 2020

Dear Families of individuals served through DDDS:

As you are well aware, Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) has become more prominent in Delaware. Please know that the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) and its network of providers are working together to plan for how we will handle services, while working diligently to keep exposure at a minimum.

As the situation changes daily, we assure you we are working to ensure the health and safety of all individuals served through DDDS, our Home and Community Based providers and their staff, and our own DDDS staff.

As you have probably experienced, many day programs have closed at the direction of Governor Carney's updated State of Emergency, which stated, "*No senior center, nursing home/retirement facility, assisted-living facility etc. shall knowingly permit a gathering of more than 10 persons that includes any person aged 60 or over or any person with an underlying health condition that puts any person in attendance at increased risk if exposed to COVID-19....*" Day provider staff are working on deep cleaning building sites. We know this disruption to routine, for both your loved ones and your families, is difficult. We are encouraging providers to think creatively about how to offer supports during this trying time. We have expedited a process for residential providers to receive additional support hours for individuals who cannot attend a day program due to COVID-19's closures.

At the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control, Division of Public Health and Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Kara Walker, our residential providers are practicing social isolation. This means many are limiting visitors to their homes, in an effort to reduce the exposure. The recommendation is that people stay at home as much of the day as is possible and not spend time in the community. Because of that recommendation, while we know it is challenging for your loved one to not be able to participate in community activities they enjoy or routines that are important to them, we ask that you honor the residential providers' request for no visitors or outside trips, unless for an emergency. For those of you with loved ones who live at home, we also ask that you follow the guidance of no outside exposures as well, and instead stay at home. It is the only way we are going to "flatten the curve," which will limit the strain on the health care system to respond to people in crisis.

The Division has stopped all in-person face-to-face contacts from Support Coordinators, Community Navigators, Nurse Consultants and Behavior Analysts, again to limit the risk of exposure. You will continue to hear from people in these roles, and they have been directed to utilize remote video conferencing via Skype, Zoom, Facetime, and the like as much as possible. When all else fails, they will reach out to you and your loved ones via telephone. We are also instituting remote meetings for Life Span Plans and Behavior Support Plan meetings.

Please look for updates on the DDDS website at <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/ddds/>, We will also post updates on Facebook.

Be well,


Cory Ellen Nourie, MSS, MLSP
Director of Community Services