DDSD Guidance Document # 1

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for New Mexico Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) In-Home Care Providers 3/16/2020

The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH), Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) is providing this guidance for Developmental Disabilities (DD), Mi Via and Medically Fragile Waiver providers. The information is adapted from various states, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

The global COVID-19 outbreak is rapidly evolving, and information will be updated when needed. It is known that that people over 60, and those with chronic medical conditions and compromised immune systems seen to be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

DDSD is committed to communicating with providers via conference calls and additional Guidance documents as needed.

This document is divided into sections for ease of use. Contents are:
- Information on COVID-19
- Preparing at the Agency and Home level
- Decreasing the risk of spread
- Resources

Information on COVID-19

COVID-19, is an illness caused by a new (novel) type of corona virus. We are learning more about COVID-19 every day. We know that COVID-19 is contagious and it may take several days to begin to feel ill after you are exposed.

Under 60 and healthy:
Most of us are not in danger of getting sick. In people who are under 60 and healthy, COVID-19 typically causes mild symptoms. Most people develop an upper respiratory infection. These symptoms include:
- Fever
- Dry Cough
- Difficulty breathing
Less common symptoms may include: body aches and feeling generally sick, headache, sore throat or diarrhea

Runny nose and sneezing is generally suggestive of a non-COVID-19 diagnosis

If anyone develops these symptoms, call the DOH Hotline at 1-855-600-3453. Seek medical care and diagnosis. Use online or Video Dr. visits when possible. Always call the Dr.’s office or Urgent Care ahead of time to inform them that you are coming and are concerned about illness or exposure to COVID-19. If calling 911, inform then that there is concern for COVID-19. Do not call ER or 911 for minor symptoms.

Over 60 and with health issues:
People who are over 60 and those who have chronic health issues, including people with disabilities, are at risk to become seriously ill. They can develop a lower respiratory infection which includes bronchitis or pneumonia.

If someone is suspected or known to have COVID-19 develops the following symptoms, 911 should be called.

- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Confusion
- Cyanosis: “blue” or dusky coloring around the face

Special note on persons with IDD: Some people normally run temperatures lower than 98.6. If that is the case, then a 2- or 3-degree increase from their normal temperature is a fever!

Preparing for COVID-19 at the Home and Agency level

- Stay informed. Daily updates are posted online on the New Mexico Department of Health website at cv.nmhealth.org.
- Develop, review, and revise your agency's emergency plan to assure that your agency has a plan to address COVID-19.
- Continue communication with DDSD, your Regional office, fellow providers, and especially people you serve, and their families and guardians.
- Establish relationships with key health care and public health partners in your community.
- Create an emergency contact list. This may include important family, staff, agency and local numbers. Include the DOH COVID-19 Hotline: 1-855-600-3453.
- Conduct an inventory of available Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and
make sure staff know how to properly use PPE.

- Assure that there is an adequate supply of soap and paper towels to support good handwashing and hand gel to use when a sink is not available.
- Develop contingency staffing plans.
- Communicate with your staff and participants about COVID-19.
  - Continue to ask all visitors to sign in as normal.
  - Screen participants and visitors for symptoms of COVID-19 using the “NM DOH Facility Visitor Screening Questionnaire” which includes a question about recent respiratory infection (fever, cough, difficulty breathing.)
  - Limit face to face meetings and use phone conferences.
  - Practice social distancing. This means keeping about 6 feet of space between people and avoiding crowded settings.
  - Employees who are ill should stay home for the duration of their illness.
- Assist participants to gather resources they would need to stay at home for up to two weeks (14 days) if they become sick or need to minimize contact with others, (such as food, medication refills.)
- Ensure that all emergency kits are stocked to include an adequate supply of water and food. (14 days)
- For DD Waiver providers: Keep copies of all needed Therap forms and Advance Directives available in case a participant needs to be evaluated by medical personnel. This includes an up to date copy of the electronic Medical Administration Record, the Health Passport and Physician Consultation form.

**Decreasing the Risk of Spreading the COVID-19**

- **Instruct visitors/families to stay home if they or anyone in their family is or has been ill in the past 2 weeks.** Help them to stay in touch with calls or text messages.

- **Proper and frequent handwashing:** *(see hyperlinked CDC video)*
  - Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap.
  - Follow these steps every time:
    - Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
    - Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
    - Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer?
Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.

- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them (do not use cloth towels that are shared with others).
- Staff must wash their hands upon entering the participants’ homes to prevent transmission of germs and viruses and periodically throughout the day.
- Encourage participants to wash their hands frequently, especially when they have been outside the home.

**Proper use of hand sanitizer**
- Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount). Rub your hands together.
- Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

**Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough** (see the hyperlinked video on sneezes) and immediately wash your hands!

**Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** as these are entries into your body where germs and viruses can enter and make us sick.

**Wipe all high touch surfaces with disinfectant:** kitchen counters, tables, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures (toilet seat, toilet handle, sink and fixtures), phones, keyboards, and remotes every shift.

**Do not come to work if you are ill** with cough, fever, and/or chills. Contact your supervisor if you, or someone in your family, is ill with fever, cough and/or chills.

**Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) wisely:** your agency nurse will advise you if masks, gowns and/or gloves will be needed.

### When someone is sick

- Notify your agency nurse and the management team immediately.
- If participants have any signs of illness, contact the **DOH COVID-19 Hotline: 1-855-600-3453.** Also call this number before going to see a medical provider in person, this means before going to a Dr.’s office, Urgent Care or the emergency room (ER).
- If you are instructed to go to a Dr.’s office, Urgent Care or ER, call ahead to alert them that this person may have COVID-19. Follow their instructions. You may be asked to not use the main entrance. If you call 911- notify them that the person has or may have COVID-19.
- If someone suspected or known to have COVID-19 develops the following symptoms, 911 should be called.
  - Cough
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Confusion
- Has “blue” or dusky coloring around the lips, mouth or fingertips (Cyanosis.) Remember that persons with COVID-19 may decline quickly.

**Hospital discharge after COVID-19**

- If you receive a call from a hospital that one of your participants is ready to return home, talk with the discharge planner at the hospital to be sure you can meet the care needs of the individual.
- Contact your Regional staff during regular business hours, or the BBS Crisis Line (505) 250-4292 after hours and on weekends if you have concerns about discharges that you feel are untimely or unsafe.
- Contact the case manager/consultant if you have a participant that is hospitalized or discharged from a hospital. Submit a General Events Report (GER) for persons on the DD Wavier.
- Contact the DDSD Regional Office nurse for advice as needed.

**Additional COVID-19 Resources**

- Educate all staff, participants, and family members about COVID-19, including the potential harm from respiratory illness to participants and basic prevention and control measures for respiratory infections.
- Here are some useful resources:
  - Hand hygiene: [https://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/providers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/providers/index.html)
  - Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette including sneeze/cough into their elbow, wear a face mask if needed, place used tissues in a garbage can and wash hands immediately after using tissues: [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm)
  - Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). PPE is recommended when caring for COVID-19 patients, including gown, gloves, mask (or respirator), and eye protection: [https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/ppe-sequence.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/ppe-sequence.pdf)
  - Transmission Precautions See CDC guidance at: [https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/basics/transmission-based-precautions.html](https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/basics/transmission-based-precautions.html)
  - Cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces with [EPA-registered](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2022-07/documents/epaguidelines.pdf)
disinfectant with a label claim of effectiveness against human coronavirus or emerging viral pathogens.

- **NM DOH website:** [https://nmhealth.org/](https://nmhealth.org/)
- **NM DOH COVID-19:** [http://cv.nmhealth.org/](http://cv.nmhealth.org/)
- **The Center for Disease Control:** [https://www.cdc.gov/](https://www.cdc.gov/)
- **The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services:** [https://www.cms.gov/](https://www.cms.gov/)

**Many Communities are offering drive up screenings and other services. Check resources in your communities. This service will likely increase in the next few weeks.**

**In Albuquerque:**

- UNM Hospitals has established a walk-up, 24/7 Respiratory Care Center located at the main UNM Hospital near the Emergency Department. (At this time, to ensure that there are enough testing kits in New Mexico, UNMH will only be testing individuals with respiratory symptoms and a history of travel to a state with a known COVID-19 outbreak, or a level 2 or 3 country, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)

- Presbyterian Hospital is offering a Video Visit (Available only for Presbyterian Health Plan members) or an Online Visit (Available to patients at least 4 years old who have been seen in person within the Presbyterian Healthcare Services delivery system within the past 36 months) may be available to determine need for testing.

- Lovelace is offering drive-thru testing for the virus at its downtown hospital geared toward those experiencing milder symptoms to keep emergency rooms clear for more severe cases and other urgent health issues. People can get screened and tested, all while staying in their cars. Officials stress that the drive-thru is for those with mild symptoms. If you feel severely ill or are having trouble breathing, you should still visit the emergency room.