

COVID-19 Update for Support Coordination Agencies
Division of Developmental Disabilities
March 18, 2020

As you are aware, the COVID-19 virus is unlike anything we have seen in the United States. The situation changes by the hour, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities is working hard to develop plans to protect staff and the individuals/families we serve. We are appreciative of the work of the Support Coordinators and Support Coordination Agencies during this challenging time.

A few updates related to the current state of affairs are outlined below.

Division of Developmental Disability Updates:

1. Division Leadership is meeting multiple times a day to work on issues related to planning, health and safety, and response to COVID-19.
2. The Division is reviewing and modifying plans for DDD essential and non-essential personnel, as well as options for working remotely if required. Our goal is to ensure DDD staffing to respond to questions and issues.
3. On March 16, 2020, the Division put out a communication which responds to the questions received to date. Please see <https://nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/documents/DDD-COVID19-FAQ-2020-03-16.pdf>
4. A special mailbox has been created by the Division *for COVID-19 questions only*. DDD.COVID-19@dhs.nj.gov. All usual Support Coordination/Division issues should use the SC Helpdesk.
5. The Division Quarterly Update will occur as planned via webinar, on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 from 1-3pm.

Would there be any changes in Incident Reporting?

For individuals assigned to Support Coordination who are residing in their own home or with family, it is the responsibility of the Support Coordinator to submit the written report. In addition, the Support Coordinator should submit reports for incidents that occur under the supervision of an Approved Provider while providing Community Based Supports.

The following will be reported as a **Medical (communicable disease) event**:

1. A DHS service recipient has been or will be tested for the COVID-19 virus
2. A DHS service recipient's family member has been or will be tested for the COVID-19 virus
3. A staff person from an approved provider has been or will be tested for the COVID-19 virus
4. A provider staff's family member has been or will be tested for the COVID-19 virus
5. Incident reports should include the date and location of the test, results, treatment and discharge date from hospital if applicable. Submission of incident reports should not be

delayed if all the information is not immediately available. The report will remain Pending and follow up information, including the discharge documentation, can be added later.

The following will be reported as an **Operational** event:

1. Staff shortage for Support Coordination Agencies that result in the inability of the SCA to perform required functions or if any other health and safety needs cannot be met.

The incidents noted above should be submitted to the ORM the same (business) day in which the Support Coordinator is informed. ORM staff are available by phone in the Mays Landing, Trenton and Plainfield offices to assist with questions and further instruction if needed.

Will there be any changes in face-to-face visit requirements?

The Division previously provided guidance that effective March 13, 2020 Support Coordination Agencies may conduct monthly contacts, quarterly and annual visits by phone or video conference instead of face-to-face visits whenever possible. This guidance includes interdisciplinary team (IDT) meetings and pre-planning meetings, annual service plans. In order to provide further clarification, the Division offers the following additional guidance:

The overarching goal is to have documentation systems align with what is needed for now, and to also ensure that individuals don't go for an extended period without a face to face contact.

1. The Support Coordinator should use the Monthly Monitoring Tool (MMT) tool required for the monthly contact. If a quarterly contact is due and contact was made by phone, the Support Coordinator must indicate on the MMT that telephone contact was completed.
2. iRecord adjustments will be able to be completed by Support Coordination Agency Supervisors, effective March 20, 2020, to change the visit type in iRecord for the current contact (to reflect the type of contact that occurred) as well as change the record to have the next contact be face to face, if appropriate. The following example is offered to provide clarity:

John Smith is due for his annual visit and annual ISP on March 17, 2020. The Support Coordinator will hold a planning team meeting via phone or video, complete all annual paperwork, and will complete the MMT to reflect that telephone contact occurred. iRecord defaults to "home visit" contact when the MMT is uploaded. However, the Support Coordinator Supervisor will have the authority and ability through the "enable an exception" feature to change the type of contact to phone contact, and thus move the "home visit requirement to the next monthly visit.

Are there any changes in signature requirements?

Until further notice, verbal or email authorizations for Service Plan signatures may be received by private and public (Bureau of Guardianship Services) guardians. The Support Coordinator will clearly note on the signature page the following: "Due to COVID-19 precautions, verbal (or email) permission from (Guardian name), and legal guardian was provided to me on (date) to move forward with plan approval". Physical signature page from the guardians shall be obtained as soon as practical.

How should changes in Service Plans be made?

It is expected that the Individual Service Plan (ISP) and Essential Lifestyle Plan (ELP) for individuals may need to change during this time period. Support Coordinators should make every effort to revise service plans as quickly as possible to reflect new or increased services being used. However, due to the volume of changes, a Support Coordinator may not be able to have an approved, updated service plan before the service is provided. In circumstances where the service is provided prior to plan approval, changes should be documented in case notes and Service Plans must be revised by May 1, 2020. For ISPs, a Retroactive Change Request will need to be submitted as soon as possible. All Service Plans with changes to services lines must be in approved status no later than May 1, 2020.

If a day program closing affected an individual, how should this be reflected in the Service Plan?

- For Individuals in a Residential Setting billing at a Daily Rate – make no changes to the individual's plan.
- For Individuals in a Residential Setting billing at 15 minute increments or for Own Home Individuals – The Support Coordinator should either stop the day habilitation service or remove the units (2 weeks or longer) that the individual will not be attending due to closure.

The SC should work with the family to identify other service(s) or increase support hours, (remaining within budget) such as an in-home support or a Self-Directed Employee (SDE).

What should be done when there is no change in service?

If the individual does not require a change in services, there is no need to update the Service Plan unless the annual service plan is due and changes are indicated.

Should the individual's budget be adjusted to accommodate additional services?

At this time, any additional services cannot exceed an individual's overall budget.

Which documents related to an individual should be updated?

Support Coordinators should ensure that all documents related to a given individual are up to date and fully reflect the care needs of the individual. This is particularly important because the individual may experience new caregivers or agencies during this time of uncertainty.

I see a new case note type in iRecord – what is this?

Support Coordinators should be alerted that a new case note type has been created in iRecord called “COVID”. This case note type can be used to document virus specific issues, as appropriate.

What is happening with Day Habilitation Providers?

The Division has discontinued attendance at day programs and community outings, per the Division communication sent on March 13, 2020, which indicated that “No later than Tuesday, March 17, all Division-funded, facility-based day services have been directed to close until advised otherwise.” Additionally, the Division has directed that community outings facilitated by providers that are not for the health or safety of an individual be discontinued immediately.

Day Habilitation providers may not bill for remote services at this time.

Is there an update on Self-Directed Employees?

1. The Division has lifted the restriction, effective March 16, 2020, on parents, guardian or spouse serving as Self-Directed Employees (SDE) for individuals. In order for the parent, guardian or spouse to serve at a SDE, the regular hiring process must be followed and the service may not begin until the Fiscal Intermediary (FI) advises that the employee may begin working. A person who is enrolled as the employer of record cannot also enroll as an SDE.
2. The Division has relaxed the requirement of Self Directed Employee usual limitation of 40 hours per week.
3. Support Coordinators and families cannot submit an email to DHS ECCU to get clearance to hire an SDE. The regular hiring process must be followed. Families should contact the Support Coordinator for information on how to enroll with the fiscal intermediary. Individuals and families are encouraged to develop a backup plan in case an SDE or a provider is unable to provide care. Talk to family and friends about how they might help.
4. **Is there a way to expedite the hiring of additional SDEs?** Yes. Please see the relevant question and answer in the *Information on Division and Licensing Operations (page -6-7)* section of this document. <https://nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/documents/DDD-COVID19-FAQ-2020-03-16.pdf>

Are there any changes to Goods and Services?

1. The Division will temporarily allow Goods & Services classes that are usually delivered in-person to be delivered online/remotely, as long as:
 - Online/remote learning is appropriate for the individual being served; and
 - The individual agrees to participate and participates in online/remote learning.

2. This guidance from the Division is in place for the next two weeks, but may be extended as the public health emergency evolves. Please be sure you stay up-to-date with Division guidance and timeframes.
3. Annual gym memberships will not be approved at this time. The request for an annual gym membership is being denied at this time based on current statewide health related business closures/restrictions. Individuals/families can resubmit the request when statewide restrictions are lifted.

Where can I find information related to COVID -19?

Support Coordination Agencies are reminded of the resources available to them for ongoing COVID-19 information:

- New Jersey Department of Health <https://www.nj.gov/health/>
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

The Division is grateful for your continued work with individuals and families as we work through this complicated time.