

LETTER TO FAMILIES

MARCH 31, 2021



Dear DDDS Families,

It has been lovely getting to meet so many of you this past week at the COVID-19 vaccine drive-thru events. In the past four days, in partnership with Rite Aid, we have vaccinated over 1,700 DDDS service recipients and their caregivers. Tomorrow we have more than 650 people who will receive their first dose of the vaccine, too.

For those who live at home with their family, Columbus Community Navigators and DDDS Family Resource Unit team members have called every single DDDS service recipient supported through the waiver or LTSS. Many voicemails were left asking for return calls. Unfortunately, there were many wrong phone numbers too. Our teams tried multiple ways to get an updated phone number, but were unsuccessful for some people. If you have not been in touch with your loved one's Community Navigator if on the waiver, or if your loved one receives LTSS - the Family Resource Unit - and you are interested in receiving the vaccine, please reach out directly to your Community Navigator or Shenika Kirby at The Columbus Organization (302-438-5414) or the DDDS Family Resource Unit (New Castle County-302-463-3507 or Kent/Sussex Counties-302-836-2115). They can get you scheduled for your first vaccine when others are coming through for their second between April 22nd -29th.

It is exciting to be at the point where so many people are being vaccinated. It is important to be mindful that COVID-19 is still very active in our state. In fact, we've seen a recent uptick in new cases. Please remember the vaccine is one tool we have to combat the virus. It must be used in conjunction with the other strategies of wearing a face mask, washing one's hands and maintaining social distance. Sadly, we have lost 21 service recipients in the past year who lived in provider-managed settings, due to COVID-19, as well as many who lived at home with their families. COVID-19 continues to be a threat.

My focus right now is on getting as many of our service recipients fully vaccinated, so we can start to plan for the new normal of services. "Fully vaccinated" means 14 days post-second dose, which will bring us into mid-May. We are actively planning for what the summer months

will look like, in hopes that day services in particular may be available to more people, as well as evaluating the restriction on no-indoor visitors to residential habilitation sites.

We have weathered a long storm this past year. I thank you for your patience and support during these past thirteen months. We are truly getting through it together.

Be well,

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

Cory Ellen Nourie, MSS, MLSP

Director of Community Services