



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICES

May 20, 2020

Dear DDDS Families,

On behalf of the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS), I want to wish congratulations to all of the students completing their high school and post-secondary education careers in the coming weeks. We know due to COVID-19, celebrations cannot be conducted in the typical way, but it does not negate the achievement of a wonderful milestone. Congratulations!

As you are aware, the Governor intends for Phase 1 in the re-opening plan to begin on June 1st. While I know this is exciting news for many people, it is deliberately a slow roll-out for the general population. Phase 1 still indicates for vulnerable populations to shelter in place and for no more than 10 people to be together, while practicing social distancing. For our DDDS service recipients, Phase 1 means day program services will continue to remain suspended.

The resumption of day services is a complex matter, considering the health and safety of DDDS service recipients, the health and safety and availability of staff who work in day services, the physical space available for day programs and the ability to practice social distancing between service recipients, among others. Additionally there are other factors to consider including transportation limitations. We are working with our providers and other state agencies to address these issues methodically.

To help us in our planning, we want to hear from families who have their loved one with a disability living at home with them, to hear your concerns about re-opening day programs, which means exposure to people they haven't been around for quite some time. For some, your adult child or adult grandchild is living with you; for others, your sibling or cousin is at home with you. To try to capture everyone's unique situation, in the survey you will see the questions referring to "my DDDS service recipient." Please forgive the formality of this language, but we are trying to include everyone who lives at home with their family members. We ask that you please only take this survey one time. It will remain open until May 31st, but please try to respond as soon as you can. The survey link is:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DDDSCOVIDSURVEY> Feel free to use the comment box with additional thoughts, but do not leave personally identifying information or questions in the comments box, as we will not be monitoring it for direct questions.

If your family member lives in a provider managed setting, please feel free to complete the survey as well, but indicate that your loved one does not live at home. Logistically, some of the questions may not pertain to your situation, so feel free to skip the questions and type your comments in the chat box.

As has been the case since COVID-19 started in Delaware, 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 their Support Coordinator for any needs. If your loved one lives at home or on their own, please reach out to their Columbus Organization Community Navigator with any needs. If your loved one is enrolled in Diamond State Health Plan Plus (often referred to as LTSS), please reach out to their Care Coordinator through their Managed Care Organization (Highmark Health Options or Amerihealth Caritas) or the DDDS Family Resource Coordination Unit with any needs.

In the meantime, it is essential that everyone continue to practice social distancing, wear a facemask in public and practice hand hygiene. The vulnerability of DDDS service recipients is apparent in the hospitalization rate amongst COVID-19 positive individuals at around 40% and unfortunately a 16% mortality rate. Our residential habilitation providers continue to restrict visitors in an effort to curtail the exposure to service recipients. As soon as it is safe to do so, we will allow visitors again. I know this has been very difficult for families and service recipients to not see each other in person. I

appreciate your patience and ask for your understanding that it is necessary because of the vulnerability of so many of our service recipients. Please continue to use technology to stay connected.

Thank you and please be well,

Cory Ellen Nourie MSS, MLSP

Cory Ellen Nourie, MSS, MLSP
Director of Community Services