



**DELAWARE HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**DIVISION OF  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**

July 3, 2020

Dear DDDS Families,

I hope this letter finds you well as we embark on a new month and get into the thick of the summer.

As you're probably aware, the number of cases of COVID-19 positive Delawareans is creeping up. I'm monitoring the situation closely and maintain hope that the state will stabilize again soon so that we can continue our work of resuming access to services.

We are continuing with Phase Two of visitor access for service recipients living in provider managed settings. Given recent incidents, I must reiterate: the visit **MUST** be at a time agreed upon by the residential provider and the family. This is for everyone's health and safety. Families are **NOT** permitted to show up unannounced. Please be sure to have a conversation with the provider ahead of time so that everyone gets a chance to enjoy their visits. I have heard some families were hoping for longer length visits and many providers are not comfortable with that yet. Keep in mind this is the first step in this process. If everyone demonstrates they are doing well with shorter length visits, providers will get more comfortable and be better-suited to allow longer length visits; the provider has to balance multiple factors in this process, most importantly the health and safety of all service recipients and their staff. Please also remember that we are trying to limit exposure with the general community. Family visits should not include excursions off-site to public spaces such as the beach or restaurants. As a reminder: if the residential site has **anyone** living there who has a chronic health condition that puts them "at-risk" like diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, OR are immunocompromised, aged 60 or older, or positive for COVID-19 then visits cannot occur at this time. This is to ensure the health and safety of the entire household, all families, and providers.

DDDS is continuing to work with our provider network to plan for a staged re-opening of day services. This is a complex operation involving many moving parts. Of the many factors that will be evaluated during this process, the incidence of COVID-19 across the state. If the number of positive cases continues to rise generally, we will delay the re-opening of day services. We are abundantly aware of the vulnerability of service recipients and those they live with in their home settings and will act accordingly, especially in light of day services being congregate settings where people are together for extended periods of time. We are currently working towards a first stage of day programming re-opening to begin in early August. This is, of course, subject to our best available knowledge of the virus, the status of infection rates, and directives from the state.

Stage One will be open to DDDS service recipients who are part of our lowest risk group: those who can: wear a face covering/face mask/face shield consistently and with minimal prompting for the entire day; practice social distancing; and who do not have a chronic health condition or an underlying health condition that places them at greater risk in this setting. The purpose of starting with this cohort is to allow our providers a chance to establish routines and protocols to ensure the health and safety of everyone before supporting those who are higher risk. Please work with your loved one's Support Coordinator or Community Navigator and their day service provider to talk about whether Stage One is the safest time to come back to services. DDDS will be issuing an acknowledgment form for service recipients and/or guardians to sign attesting to their understanding of and ability to follow the procedures and protocols laid out in this

first stage. Please note that individual providers may have their own forms for service recipients and/or families to sign ahead of these re-openings.

As we work on ironing out the details, I recommend working with your loved one to get comfortable wearing a face covering/face mask/face shield and developing an understanding of the practice of social distancing.

We encourage all of you to continue to follow the everyday practices that have done so much to help us control the spread of this virus: practice social distancing; wash your hands; wear a mask in public settings. Together we can protect our families, loved ones, and communities. If appropriate, please consider getting tested at one of the many testing sites around the state. You can register at <https://delaware.curativeinc.com>

As has been the case for the past 14 weeks, DDDS and the Columbus Organization employees all continue to work. Should you need anything, please do not hesitate to reach out to your loved one's Support Coordinator, Community Navigator or MCO Care Coordinator.

Thank you and be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cory Ellen Nourie" followed by the text "MSS, MLSP" in a smaller font.

Cory Ellen Nourie, MSS, MLSP  
Director of Community Services