

## NASDDDS COVID-19 Response

### Suggested Actions for Restoration of Day and Employment Provider Networks

There is an urgency for state ID/DD agencies to give attention to day and employment facility-based providers in order to maintain provider capacity. While this document focuses on facility-based day and employment provider services, the content is also relevant to other aspects of the DD service system such as residential services, in-home supports, and self-directed services to assure maintenance of a strong provider network as we move through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congregate service settings have closed their doors in response to federal guidance and governors' declarations for shuttering of all group gatherings, venues, and non-essential businesses. This has put a particular strain on our day and employment facility-based providers as well as our community inclusion and supported employment services. States are stabilizing these services by obtaining needed modifications to their Medicare and Medicaid State Plans and Waiver Authorities to assure essential services continue.

It is time to turn the focus on our provider networks to assure they remain viable and prepared to return to capacity as soon as feasible. In addition, it is an opportunity to transform our congregate service delivery as we move forward to meet the tenants of the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Final Rule.

#### State ID/DD agencies can take action to:

- Coordinate with the Medicaid Agency to establish and clearly message to providers' new/revised protocols, enhanced rates, specialized payments, and provider retainer payments.
- Complete provider inventory
  - Confirm from providers what they need to sustain business for worst-case scenario, today, tomorrow and the months ahead.
  - Work with your Governor's Office to declare direct support professionals (DSP) and employment specialists as essential/critical members of the workforce.
  - Determine which providers have laid-off DSPs and what is required to call staff back to work through teleworking options, redeployment, etc.
  - Provide guidance to day and employment facility-based providers regarding expectations for providing services and supports remotely or to deploy to other locations (e.g. group homes, family homes) to be eligible for payment of ongoing services outside facility environments.
- Assure clear and readily available guidance to all personal care and habilitation service providers about retainer payments for authorized services for individuals not receiving service. Pennsylvania example: <https://palms-awss3-repository.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/Communications/ODP/2020/ODPANN+20-031+COVID-19+Retainer+Payments+to+CPS+Providers+End.pdf>
- Provide guidance on how staff can be deployed across providers and settings
  - Set up a web-based portal for providers to contact each other for coverage needs
  - Guide providers through the mechanics of redeploying DSPs as essential workers to assure covered health and safety needs of individuals and their families within their own agency or through cooperative agreements with other provider agencies.
  - Recommend deployed staff remain employed by the original provider as employer of record to assure continuity of staff individual relationships, tracking of staff training, liability insurance coverage, payroll, etc.
- Set expectations for providers to prioritize staff time on individual-focused activities.

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- Provide suggestions for homebound activities and schedules to maintain healthy lifestyles while sheltering in place.
- Prioritize ongoing communication
  - Hold frequent teleconferences with providers to keep them and the state team abreast of what each is managing and to stay ahead of emergent issues.
  - Develop clear and direct written communications for website posting. Set up a webmail box as a central location to capture questions from the field.
  - Provide directives for consistent messaging to individuals and families.
- Use the upcoming months as an opportunity to reshape the provider service structure in keeping with HCBS rules to assure services and supports are integrated and person-centered as the system returns to full capacity.

These additional resources will support understanding of the new provisions for paid leave, unemployment benefits, tax credits and small business loans.

- <https://www.dol.gov/coronavirus>
- <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/whd/whd20200326>
- [CARES ACT: Small Business Guidance and Loan Resources](#)
- <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>