


<b>STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE BDS GENERAL MEMORANDUM (GM)</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	March 16, 2020
<b>TO:</b>	Area Agency Executive Directors, Area Agency Business Managers, Area Agency Service Coordinator Supervisors, Provider Agencies, Bureau of Developmental Services Staff, Bureau of Family Centered Services, Office of Client and Legal Services, Christine Tappan, DHHS, Kerrin Rounds, DHHS.
<b>FROM:</b>	Sandy Hunt, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Developmental Services
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	COVID-19 Emergency Communications for Families, Guardians, and Participants
<b>GM NUMBER:</b>	N/A
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	March 13, 2020
<b>REGULATORY GUIDANCE:</b>	This memo is a communication tool circulated for informational purposes only. The goal is to provide information and guidance to the individuals to whom it is addressed. The contents of this memo and the information conveyed are subject to change. This information is to be forwarded to participants, families, and guardians by Area Agencies.

<b>MEMORANDUM SUMMARY</b>
<p>The purpose of this memorandum is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide statewide guidance to participants, families, and guardians relative to COVID-19 Emergency preparation and answers to Frequently Asked Questions.</li> </ul>

Area Agencies that provide services to people with developmental disabilities and those with acquired brain disorders are responsible for daily operations and management of their COVID-19 emergency local responses and are prepared to manage operations during an emergency or other disruption to normal activities. The Bureau of Developmental Services is working with the Area Agencies, and its providers of residential and day services, to adhere to the guidance outlined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the state's Division of Public Health as well as federal and state partners. Following are some common questions and answers:

- **Who do I contact to plan now for service and support options?** Reach out to your Area Agency and service providers, including your service coordinators, with any concerns.

You should consider advance planning with your team in light of the COVID-19 Emergency. Agencies and service providers all have emergency plans for protecting the individuals in their care.

- **Who do I contact if I get sick and am unable to care for my adult family member?** Please reach out to your Area Agency if you become ill and are unable to provide care. The agency will work with you to consider the emergent situation and determine next steps. Families and guardians have a responsibility for preparedness planning, so you should consider your options now, taking into account your family member's physical, medical and behavioral needs. Your case manager can help with planning. Families should maintain food, household goods, personal supplies, and medications to last for 14 days in their home. Make sure you have an up to date list of respite providers and their contact information.
- **Will community residences close?** There is no intention to close community residences at this time, but this is a changing situation. The goal is for services to continue with as little disruption as possible. However, Area Agencies will work with providers of services to assess their situations on a regular basis. This assessment will include resident health, home provider health, availability of staff/supports, and access to supplies and medical care. In addition, information and directives from local, state, and federal officials may affect how services are delivered. Area Agencies and providers are working together to identify contingency options for alternative care should there be a change in circumstances in any residence or in the community. In the event change is needed, individuals and their families and guardians will be included in planning. If a person's current situation becomes untenable, changes could include replacing or retraining staff, providing medical supports, moving the person temporarily to a different home or identifying new providers. Agencies are required to respond promptly and flexibly to circumstances as they arise.
- **Will the Area Agencies be open? Will the on call service be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?** Area Agencies are open as usual. Working conditions may change in the future based on direction from the federal or state officials, but all critical functions through the agencies will continue to be performed. Agency on-call services will remain active, and Area Agency staff will be available to assist individuals and their families or guardians. In addition, all service providers are expected to maintain essential operations.
- **Will the Bureau of Developmental Services be open?** The Bureau of Developmental Services is open and prepared to continue operations. The main contact number for the Bureau is 603-271-5034.
- **Can I take my family member home from a residential provider?** As always, families can take their loved ones home for a visit. Families and providers should have a preparedness conversation, and residential providers may need to screen individuals for health risks before their return. Be aware that programs may also decline or screen visitors to limit exposure within the program. It's important to talk to service providers about their plans.
- **Can I visit my family member in a residential setting?** Please check in with the Area Agency or Group Home provider for guidance.
- **Can I get the prescriptions and medical supplies filled in advance?** Insurers are being directed to allow members to obtain 90-day supplies of medications and supplies, when available, and to ensure continuous access to prescriptions. Please contact your prescriber and insurer for more information.
- **Will Service Coordination visits continue to be face to face?** Service Coordination visits will continue as usual and may be done remotely through telephone, skype or other communications technology. An individual or their guardian may request to conduct Service Coordination visit by phone instead of in-person due to COVID-19 concerns.

- **Will the Area Agency system be expanding or curtailing community participation services (day program) availability since Direct Support Professionals may fall ill?** Each agency will respond flexibly to assure individual needs are addressed. Agencies understand that day services are essential to the well being of individuals and their families. Ongoing assessment of local circumstances will drive how programs will be organized to best serve everyone. When possible, staffing individuals at home may be preferred, If the COVID-19 Emergency becomes more widespread in New Hampshire, congregate settings may be more feasible, although not ideal. We encourage everyone, participants, staff and families alike, to prevent the spread of illness in day programs with common sense infection control measures. These include staying home when ill, frequent hand washing, avoiding crowded indoor spaces, and covering coughs/sneezes. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> for more detailed information.
- **How can people stay up-to-date as the situation evolves for New Hampshire's developmental services system?** Your Area Agency is your best contact if you have questions or concerns. Area Agencies, along with day and residential providers, are reaching out to individuals, families, and guardians through email, phone messages, social media, and direct mailings, with general guidance and preparedness. For general COVID-19 information, visit the state's COVID-19 webpage at [nh.gov](https://www.nh.gov/index.htm) at <https://www.nh.gov/index.htm>.

**211 NH has been mobilized to handle all COVID-19 related calls from New Hampshire residents.** All residents with questions or concerns surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak can call 2-1-1.

