



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Department of Developmental Services
500 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02118

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn E. Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Marylou Sudders
Secretary

Jane F. Ryder
Commissioner

(617) 727-5608
DDS Video Phone: (857) 366-4179

To: DDS Individuals and Families
From: Commissioner Jane F. Ryder
Date: 4/14/2020
Subject: Coronavirus Update for Individuals and Families

Dear DDS Community:

I'd like to provide an update on the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) response to COVID-19 as of Tuesday, April 14.

As we deal with this unprecedented crisis, we are working tirelessly to support all the individuals and families in the DDS community. The anxiety, uncertainty, and seriousness of this virus can seem overwhelming. In this rapidly evolving public health crisis, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Public Health update their guidance, we are adjusting our guidance to meet or exceed their standards. Our Service Coordinators are available and will continue to reach out. We are working with our Family Support Centers to assist families in providing the resources you need to keep your loved ones safe. We are supporting our direct care staff, the great unsung heroes who continue to go above and beyond in making sure your loved ones – your sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters – remain safe.

We expect the next few weeks will be challenging for all of us. I know that each of you are feeling the impact of COVID-19 on all aspects of your life, including your job, family, and friends. DDS is committed to working with you, and to supporting you and your loved ones during this trying time.

Your Area Office is the primary DDS point-of-contact for you regarding ongoing services and supports and will remain in contact with you to help mitigate any disruptions and ensure needs are addressed.

We will continue to update the [DDS COVID-19 Resources and Support website](#) and social media as information becomes available. Please contact your Area Office with any immediate questions or for assistance.

Thank you,

Jane F. Ryder
Commissioner
[Department of Developmental Services](#)

Mobile Testing

Mobile testing is now available to residents and staff in DDS state-operated or provider-operated residential programs through a partnership with Fallon Ambulance and MassHealth. Mobile testing began this past weekend, starting with our facilities at Hogan and Wrentham and homes where an individual is showing symptoms or a resident or staff has a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Updated DDS Residential Program Guidance

DDS has released updated guidance for residential programs. This guidance follows the latest recommendations from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and includes important policy and protocol updates regarding:

- What COVID-19 is and how it spreads.
- Restrictions on Visitors.
- Screening Staff.
- Face Mask Protocols.
- Mobile Testing.
- Reporting Positive Cases to DDS.
- On-Site Care.
- Moving Residents to an Alternative Site.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Cleaning and Deep Cleaning.

For more information, please see the full updated guidance here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/dds-residential-program-guidance-dds-updated-april-13/download>

Face Masks

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, staff are now required to wear facemasks, including cloth face coverings if approved-PPE is not available. If your loved one has a positive case of COVID-19, they may be asked to wear a facemask if they can do so without putting them at risk, such as trouble breathing.

COVID-19 Recovery Centers

In an effort to best protect individuals served by DDS and our direct care staff, we are opening COVID-19 recovery and isolation centers at three of our DDS facilities. These sites will be made available to DDS individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and are unable to safely quarantine at home. Many of our providers are also developing emergency alternative residential sites and will communicate with you in advance, should this be recommended for your loved one.

Health

If you or anyone in your family has symptoms of illness (fever, cough, or difficulty breathing) or potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus, please take these steps:

- Check your symptoms online: buoy.com/mass
- Contact your primary care physician and follow their guidance.
- Contact the Massachusetts DPH epidemiology line: [\(617\) 983-6800](tel:6179836800).

For the latest information on COVID-19, please call 2-1-1 or visit: mass.gov/covid19

Disabled Persons Protection Committee (DPPC)

To report suspicion of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or neglect of a person with a disability, contact the DPPC 24-hour hotline:

- [1-800-426-9009](tel:1-800-426-9009)
- [1-888-822-0350](tel:1-888-822-0350) (TTY)

Family Support

DDS-funded [Family Support Centers](#) are here to support you through this crisis and can be a source for emergency support and information about local resources. Please contact your DDS Area Office if you need help connecting with your local Family Support Center.

Supportive Technology Stories

DDS would like to feature stories of success with supportive technology so others may see the uses and benefits of these tools. If you've had success using supportive tech, such as tablets, voice assistants, telemedicine, or remote services, let us know. Get in touch on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) @DDSmass to share your story.