

DAIL COVID-19 Guidance to Independent Employers and Their Employees April 3, 2020

The presence of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in our communities has led to new challenges for us all. This document provides information and guidance to independent employers and their employees under the Attendant Services, Children's Personal Care Services, Choices for Care, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Developmental Disabilities Services programs. Please note that the public health situation is changing, and guidance may change as a result.

We know that people may be 'carriers' of the COVID-19 virus without having any symptoms. We also know that many of the people served by DAIL programs are older and/or have health conditions, and this puts them at risk of extremely severe symptoms if they are exposed to the COVID-19 virus. If large numbers of people get sick at the same time, our healthcare system may be overwhelmed. This means that face to face contact between people should be avoided whenever possible. However, some people need essential services that are necessary for their health and safety.

Essential Services:

Independent Direct Support Workers who provide services under the Choices for Care, Developmental Disability Services, Traumatic Brain Injury, Attendant Services, Children's Personal Care Services, and Medicaid Adult High Tech programs may be considered 'healthcare service providers' and 'caregivers' of 'essential services', as ordered by Governor Scott. To assure the health and safety of people, Independent Direct Support Workers should continue to provide 'essential services' and should discontinue in-person non-essential services.

'Essential services' are those that are necessary to assure the health and safety of a person. Essential Services delivered in-person or "face to face" may continue if the services cannot be provided in an alternate way, such as telephone or facetime.

Examples of 'essential services' include:

- Help getting and taking medication.
- Help getting groceries or food, cooking, or Home Delivered Meals.
- Help with daily activities such as eating, using the toilet, bathing or showering, getting out of bed, and getting dressed.
- Help getting to and from medical appointments.
- Obtaining essential supplies related to health and sanitation.
- Other activities that are necessary for the health and safety of the person.

Essential services will help to assure that people are:

- Alive and safe during the crisis.
- Will come out of the crisis with enough physical strength to continue on after the crisis.
- Will come out of the crisis with enough emotional strength to continue on after the crisis.

The employer must decide if services provided by a worker to a specific person are 'essential', based on individual needs and circumstances. If there are other people in the home who can provide care, consider having them provide care or services. Essential services may continue to

be provided in person by people outside the home if the services cannot be provided in alternate ways such as telephone or facetime.

Other in-person services that do not directly contribute to the person's health and safety are considered to be 'non-essential'. Examples of services that may be 'non-essential' include respite services, companion services, community support services, and employment supports. The person, the employer and family/team members should discuss what services are needed to protect the person's health and safety. As directed by the Governor, 'non-essential' services should be suspended.

Workers who continue to provide essential services should be aware of the following guidance, which can help them provide services safely:

- "Recommended Precautions for Caregivers" gives information to employers, caregivers, consumers, and family members about COVID-19 symptoms, precautions and what to do if a person has symptoms. Relevant information is available at the link below, as well as in a separate document at the end of this document:
https://dail.vermont.gov/sites/dail/files/documents/Recommended_Precautions_For_Caregivers-Coronavirus-03-10-20.pdf
- Consider avoiding or reducing trips/visits:
Medication: If the person requires medication, make sure that that an adequate supply of medications is in the home (e.g 14-30 days). Consider asking the pharmacy to deliver medications to your home. Consider getting different prescriptions at the same time, and in larger quantities.
Food: Make sure that the person has enough food or groceries in the home. Consider fewer trips to the grocery store by buying more items at the same time. If the person is unable to cook, consider cooking more than one meal at a time.

Backup plans:

Most programs require that a case manager work with the person to develop a 'backup plan'. This plan is in case regularly scheduled workers are not available. The person receiving services, or the person's guardian can contact their case manager/service coordinator/designated or specialized services agency/Transition II for support and to explore additional backup plan options.

Consider hiring additional staff now.

- The ARIS Hiring Packet must be completed to make certain a caregiver can be paid.
- ARIS hiring information can be found at the link below or by calling ARIS Solutions at 800-798-1658
<http://www.arissolutions.org/medicaid.php>

Additional information:

ARIS has posted a longer document with additional guidance and information for employers and their employees at:

www.arissolutions.org