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**Cc:** [Roth, Amy](#); [Parro, Lisa](#); [Hentcy, Kathleen](#); [Rowell, Jennifer](#)  
**Subject:** DDSD planning and COVID-19  
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Dear DS Directors,

Thank you for your leadership during a public health crisis that is both global and local. This email is to provide you with some baseline information about a few tools and approaches to help ensure the health and wellbeing of the people we serve, as well as our staff, ourselves, our families, friends, neighbors and communities.

We will be sending a separate calendar appointment for a DS Director meeting to occur on Monday, 3/16, for Q&A with Commissioner Monica Hutt, Public Information Officer Monica White, DDSD Director Selina Hickman and Assistant DDSD Director Amy Roth. We will also plan to have someone from Adult Services Division to help field any questions around Adult Family Care.

#### Tools for ensuring health and safety

The DAIL [website](#) includes information about best practices for ensuring health and safety during this pandemic as well as the Vermont Department of Health [website](#). We will not repeat them in this email, however, we expect that Agencies are promoting these practices for all individuals served, employees, visitors, contractors, and ARIS-paid workers.

#### Health and safety for those that we serve

As you well know, the presence of a disability does not itself mean that a person is at higher risk, however, the CDC has identified that some individuals are at [higher risk](#). As you are working through your emergency response plans for all of the populations that you serve, you should also be identifying individuals who are at higher risk. *In addition* to general precautionary measures, our expectation is that Agencies will be crafting individual emergency plans in a person-centered manner to ensure the health and safety of people at higher risk.

Specific to DDSD, precautionary measures for individuals at higher risk include-

1. The temporary substitution of activities that increase the risk of exposure to COVID-19 such as community supports, supported employment and group activities.
2. Temporary reductions of non-essential visitors. Decrease visitors as much as possible, ideally to 1 or 2 immediate supports identified by the individual and their team.
3. Identifying back-up supports and creating specific plans for how a quarantine and/or requirement for isolation would be implemented.

### Supporting staff and key client team members

During this time of uncertainty, it is especially important that we are supporting each other and our staffs. The amount of information being shared is very anxiety producing for everyone. At the same time that we are implementing precautionary measures such as sending any staff home that may have symptoms of illness, we are also responsible for checking in and reassuring people of our planning efforts and availability. Even if it is occurring remotely, please ensure that staff and shared living providers are getting consistent support through regular contact with service coordinators or other Agency staff.

### DDSD – exploration of temporary flexibilities

We would like to spend some time in conversation with you on Monday to understand what temporary areas of flexibility may be necessary and/or desirable to ensure the stability of our service network, as well as areas of guidance that are currently lacking. Please plan to come Monday with questions and ideas.

Finally, if you have specific questions or concerns regarding your individual emergency response planning measures, please reach out at any time.

Regards,

Selina