

MEMO

To: Choices for Care, Developmental Disabilities Services, TBI Program Providers

From: Megan Tierney-Ward, Deputy Commissioner

Date: March 17, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Information & Programmatic Guidance for Home-Based Services

This memo is to provide COVID-19 information and programmatic guidance to case managers, service coordinators, and home-based service providers for people on the Choices for Care, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Developmental Disabilities Services programs.

Important COVID-19 Information

For the most up-to-date guidance on precautions, screening questions, service restrictions and Department of Labor guidance please refer to these web pages:

- [Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living COVID-19 Web Page](#)
- [Vermont Department of Health COVID-19 Web Page](#)

As of 3/16/20, the Governor had issued an Executive Order and two addendums strictly limiting public access to licensed facilities and group congregations and closing restaurants and bars with the exception of take out and food delivery.

As of 3/17/20, Adult Day and Senior Centers received guidance strongly recommending that they close their sites until at least April 15, 2020.

While Adult Day Centers and Senior Centers are closed, home delivered meals are an option for those who may need them. Contact the local Area Agency on Aging for more information about nutrition services at 1-800-642-5119.

As of 3/17/20, the Vermont Department of Health issued guidance for home-based service delivery to prioritize the delivery of "essential" home-based services. The guidance, including recommended screening questions for essential home-based services, can be found on the DAIL COVID-19 web page.

Program Guidance for the Delivery of Essential Home-Based Services

As a reminder, people may be asymptomatic carriers of the COVID-19 virus and the individuals you serve may have underlying health conditions that could make them high risk. Therefore, the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) has issued the attached guidance on the delivery of home-based services with the goal of minimizing person-to-person contact to reduce the spread of the virus. In this guidance, “home-based services” are services coming into a person’s home and do not include live-in services (such as Shared Living Providers or Adult Family Care providers). The guidance is posted on the [DAIL COVID-19 web page](#).

As described in the VDH guidance, the current priority is ensuring that “essential” home-based services continue. “Essential services” are services that assure the health and safety of a person. **Examples of “essential services” include:**

- Medication management
- Clinical Supports and/or nursing services
- Food availability and ingestion
- Independent and daily living supports
- Obtaining essential home supplies related to health and sanitation
- Ensuring human contact

All **non-essential** home-based services should be suspended if alternative remote delivery methods are not available. For example, regular, non-essential case management/service coordination check-ins should happen by phone or other remote methods such as Facetime or Skype.

In an effort to inform people about COVID-19 and the State’s guidelines, please address the following items during case management/service coordination check-ins with consumers, family members and caregivers:

- Using the “[Recommended Precautions for Caregivers](#)” info-document educate consumers, their family and caregiver(s) about COVID-19 symptoms, precautions and what to do if they have symptoms.
- Assure an adequate supply of medications and healthcare supplies is in the home.
- Assure enough food supplies and that nutrition needs are being met.
- Review and update as needed, the consumer’s backup plan.
 - Determine if there are family members in the home who can provide care.
 - Identify and confirm emergency contacts.
 - Prioritize **essential services** such as personal care and obtaining food/supplies.
 - Discuss creative ways to get services in a manner that reduces in-person contact with consumers.
- Inform consumers that **non-essential** services will be suspended or modified.
- Inform the consumer, their family and caregiver(s) that their case manager/service coordinator is the primary contact for addressing interruptions in essential services.

Direct service providers are encouraged to prioritize services to people at highest risk and in need of essential services.

Other Program Guidance/Updates

Until further notice, the following program modifications apply.

- State clinical and financial reviews for new program applications in Choices for Care will be done remotely.
- Applications for Developmental Disabilities Services continue to be accepted by DAs. DAs will consult with DAIL/DDSD regarding any barriers to the process.
- Services that require regular re-authorization by the State will be extended to assure that services continue without a break.
- If there is a change in status which requires an increase to the current State authorization level, the case manager or provider should work directly with their normal state program contact.

For additional questions about the delivery of essential home-based services or program guidance, please contact the designated program staff below for technical assistance.

- Choices for Care: Angela McMann, angela.mcmann@vermont.gov
Office: (802)-241-0309 Cell: (802) 989-0454
- Developmental Disabilities Services: Amy Roth, amy.roth@vermont.gov
Office: (802) 241-0306 Cell (802) 595-9486
- Traumatic Brain Injury Program: Sara Lane, sara.lane@vermont.gov
Office: (802) 241-0299 Cell: (802) 540-5704

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & UPDATES – Please visit the Vermont Health Department’s, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention OR the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living’s website at:

- <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease/2019-novel-coronavirus>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- <https://dail.vermont.gov/novel-coronavirus-information>