



Congregate Day Program Re-Opening Requirements

September 3, 2020

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Introduction

Congregate day programs funded by the Division of Developmental Disabilities (Division) have been closed since March 2020.

New Jersey's restart and recovery is guided by data, improvements in public health, and the capacity to safeguard the public. As a result of improvements across these measures, congregate day programs are permitted to reopen at limited capacity once all of the required reopening criteria outlined herein have been met, **and not sooner than Monday, September 21, 2020**. This provides individuals, families and guardians time to review this document and gives providers and support coordinators time to implement and comply with all requirements.

The Division will be prepared to move back to requirements that are more restrictive if public health indicators worsen or the Division observes compliance issues with the requirements outlined herein.

Specific actions needed by providers to re-open are outlined in [How to Use this Document – Providers](#). Please note that the referenced [Congregate Day Program Re-Opening Attestation](#) must be submitted at least 48 hours before a facility re-opens. One Attestation form can be used for a provider that operates multiple sites.

[How to Use this Document – Individuals, Families, Guardians and Support Coordinators](#) can be used by families to guide their decision making around returning to in-person congregate day services. Helpful tools are provided as well as information related to spread, exposure risk and prevention of COVID-19.

As re-opening commences, the Division and providers will be taking on the tremendous responsibility for ensuring the wellbeing of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in an environment in which risks are significantly higher and more complex than they were pre-pandemic.

It is every person's responsibility to assist in keeping the individuals we all serve and value as safe as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, individuals, families, guardians and providers must monitor for signs, symptoms and fever of those choosing to return to congregate day services and not send individuals if they are sick or think they may be.

The requirements included in this document are imposed in conjunction with other applicable laws and regulations. In the rare event that these requirements are in conflict with another law or regulation, the more stringent requirement shall be enforced. All congregate day programs will be required to be in compliance. Failure to comply will result in negative action, up to and including program closure.

This guidance is substantially derived from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and New Jersey Department of Health guidance and documents. It reflects what is known about COVID-19 at the time of publication and will be modified as more is learned about the virus. Information has been supplemented or modified to reflect the needs of New Jersey.

It is important to note that, even with prudent steps being taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection, neither the day program provider nor the Division can guarantee that COVID-19 transmission will not occur. For this reason, it is of the utmost importance that the individual seeking to participate in day program services, and those important to them (family, guardian and provider) discuss the overall risk to the individual's health. Other important information to consider from the CDC can be found at:

- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/activities.html
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fneed-extra-precautions%2Fpeople-at-higher-risk.html

How to Use This Document – Individuals, Families, Guardians and Support Coordinators

It is important that each individual or their guardian, if they have one, make their own decisions related to returning to in-person congregated day services. To assist in providing as much information as possible so that informed choice can be made, please review this document in its entirety.

Areas of importance for individuals, families and guardians are the [Individual Needs and Risk Assessment](#) and [Receipt of COVID-19 Information Form](#). Both documents contain helpful information from the CDC related to the spread, exposure risk and prevention of COVID-19. The assessment also outlines situational and behavioral risk factors that must be considered when making this important decision. The [Individual Needs and Risk Assessment](#) is meant to be completed with the day services provider, individual and guardian (as applicable).

The day services provider will be required to maintain both forms on-site at the facility and are subject to audit by the Division at any time. The [Receipt of COVID-19 Information Form](#) must be signed by the individual or their guardian (if they have one) before they return to in-person congregated day services.

As the choice of participating, or not participating, in congregated day services during these unusual times is not a one size fits all decision, the choice, safety and the comfort level of each individual must be the priority. Individuals/Families, Support Coordinators and Day Providers will need to promote person centered opportunities that focus on supporting the “best life” for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Resources to support exploration and identification of person centered planning can be utilized to assist in this process. One resource for this, *Charting the LifeCourse Person Centered Tools*, is found here: www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/foundational-tools/person-centered/

Many individuals/families have asked if they choose not to return to congregated day services will their space in the program be ‘held’. This is a conversation that must occur with the day services provider. An opportunity for this discussion can take place when completing the [Individual Needs and Risk Assessment](#) referenced below.

Additionally, providers must discuss any changes to the overall structure of the day program setting, including new procedures, new requirements, and any changes to the daytime hours of service provided. Individuals, families, guardians and support coordinators should be clear about how these changes may impact the individual's available budget.

If an individual has determined they wish to return to in-person congregated day services, the Support Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that any required plan revisions occur to ensure that prior authorizations for the service are present and relevant case notes are entered into iRecord. Prior authorizations are required before an individual uses any service.

How to Use This Document - Providers

Each day services provider shall review this document in its entirety. The day services provider must comply with the following:

- Contact each prospective or previously served individual or their guardian, if the individual has a guardian, to complete an [Individual Needs and Risk Assessment](#)* **together** to determine their interest in services.
- Using the information obtained from the [Individual Needs and Risk Assessment](#), complete one [Facility Readiness Tool](#)* for each congregated day location that is re-opening.
- Complete and return the [Congregate Day Program Re-Opening Attestation](#). *This must be printed, signed, scanned and emailed to the Division's Provider Performance and Monitoring Unit at DDD.PPMU@dhs.nj.gov at least 48 hours before each facility re-opens. One Attestation can be used for a provider operating multiple sites.*
- For individuals who elect to return to in-person congregated day services, obtain the [Receipt of COVID-19 Information Form](#)* signed by the individual or their guardian (if they have one) before the individual returns to in-person congregated day services.

**Indicates documents that are to be maintained by the provider at the day services facility location and are subject to audit by the Division at any time.*

It is imperative that congregate day programs consistently communicate with the individuals/families they serve. Some examples of how day programs may communicate with individuals and families while maintaining health and safety are phone calls, texts, emails, and virtual meetings to provide information, resources and updates. Participation in this communication by individuals/families is the key for these methods to be successful.

Screening and Admittance

All individuals, staff, contracted professionals, and visitors must be cleared for admittance to the facility through screening, including temperature checks, as outlined in the [Residential and Day Program Screening Policy](#). This includes scheduled staff coming onto each shift. A record of all screenings shall be maintained. The only exception when screening is not needed ahead of entering the program is for first responders who are entering the facility to address an emergency.

In all instances, screening must occur in an accessible designated area that accommodates social distancing and infection control standards. This may be an area outdoors or in the immediate entryway of the facility. Indoor screening areas must be separated from the program facility by walls or physical barriers. Outdoor screening areas must be sufficiently sheltered to allow utilization during inclement weather. In-car screening is permissible. Screening for fever and signs of COVID-19 also need to occur before entry onto an agency vehicle during pick up. The driver can deny transportation to a day program if the individual is demonstrating symptoms or otherwise is identified as presenting a COVID risk. A record of all screenings shall be maintained.

Personnel that are not entering the building, such as those delivering supplies, do not have to be screened. The day program supervisor shall establish a designated area outside the facility where deliveries can take place. Staff and individuals must maintain a distance of six feet or more from delivery personnel, disinfect any packaging before taking them into the facility, and wash their hands after handling deliveries.

Day program providers shall encourage individuals, families, guardians and residential providers to be on the alert for signs of illness and to keep individuals home if they are sick or think they may be.

Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All staff shall be required to wear a face covering that covers the nose and mouth and appropriate PPE while working. Staff shall be trained by the provider in safely donning and doffing PPE¹ that they are required to use. Staff should also be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering.

Individual program participants shall be encouraged to wear face coverings. This guidance recognizes that some individual program participants may not tolerate wearing face coverings or it may not be medically advisable for them to wear one. However, individual participants for whom it is not medically contraindicated should be encouraged to wear a face covering that covers the nose and mouth within the facility and/or in the agency vehicle. Individual participants wearing face coverings should also be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering.

The inability of an individual program participant to tolerate or otherwise be able to wear a face covering and/or practice social distancing does not, in and of itself, preclude them from participating in in-person congregate day services. Factors such as the decision of the individual/guardian to participate, underlying health conditions, the determination of the provider that they can safely serve the individual, etc. all will play a role in this joint decision.

Face shields are not a substitute for masks. If an individual participant does wear a face shield because they cannot tolerate a mask, it should wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend to below the chin. Staff must not wear a face shield in place of a mask, but may wear a face shield in addition to a mask.

¹ www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html

Promoting Healthy Hygiene Practices

Facilities shall teach and reinforce proper hand washing² and covering coughs and sneezes³ among individuals and staff. Hand washing shall occur frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, including upon arrival at a day program site, before eating, after toileting and after spending time outside. Staff shall wash their hands upon arriving at the facility, before entering their assigned area, before meals or snacks, after community outings or time spent outside, after going to the bathroom, and prior to leaving for home. Individuals are to be encouraged to do the same to the best of their ability and be monitored to ensure proper technique.

Whenever possible, facilities should set up hand hygiene stations at the entrance to the facility so that those entering the facility can clean their hands before entering. If installation of a hygiene station is not possible, staff shall ensure handwashing upon arrival.

Facilities shall have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand-sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and all individuals who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels and tissues. Supplies must be secured at each location to prevent accidental ingestion.

When physical assistance is required from staff for an individual's personal care needs proper PPE (face covering, gloves, gown, etc.) must be worn. This PPE shall be changed after caring for an individual's personal needs like toileting. PPE shall also be changed between working with different individuals needing personal care assistance. Special care should be taken when changing adult briefs as COVID-19 may be present in fecal matter⁴. Staff shall change the individual's clothes when soiled. Any contaminated clothes should be placed in a plastic bag immediately or washed in a washing machine. Areas and equipment used during assistance with personal care needs shall be cleaned and sanitized after each use.

Total Number of Individuals Served, Group Sizes and Social Distancing

The total number of individuals served at one time at a Division funded congregate day program will be 25% of the established Certificate of Occupancy for a location **or** the number of individuals who can be served while maintaining social distancing (six feet apart) at all times, whichever is less. Day service providers shall ensure that in the event of inclement weather that if individuals on community outings return to the facility that it does not negatively impact the ability to maintain the aforementioned social distancing.

When determining the composition of groups several factors must be considered. Overall compatibility and underlying medical issues are very important. In addition, individuals who share the below characteristics shall be grouped together when realistic:

- Individuals who reside together;
- Individuals who do not reside together but spend time with each other outside of day program;
- Individuals who reside in the same geographic area.

Group sizes shall be 15 or less individuals, and include the same individuals each day. The same staff shall be assigned to care for the same group each day. Group size, composition and assigned staff shall be consistent no matter the activity occurring or location the activity is taking place (i.e., within the facility or in the community). Each day, a record shall be maintained in the event it is needed for contact tracing that documents which individuals were in a group and the staff who worked with them.

Groups shall have designated areas that are separated within the facility by walls or other physical partitions. Total number of groups/individuals allowed in the facility on a given day and time shall be determined based on state guidance regarding capacity for indoor venues and the results of the [Facility Readiness Tool](#).

² www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html

³ www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

⁴ www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Spread

This guidance recognizes that some individuals may not understand the importance of social distancing (being at least six feet apart) from those who they do not live with. However, individuals should be encouraged to socially distance to lessen COVID-19 exposure risk. Groups shall socially distance from other groups. Within each established group, individuals who do not live together shall be encouraged to socially distance and wear face coverings.

The inability of an individual program participant to tolerate or otherwise be able to wear a face covering and/or practice social distancing does not, in and of itself, preclude them from participating in in-person congregate day services. Factors such as the decision of the individual/guardian to participate, underlying health conditions, the determination of the provider that they can safely serve the individual, etc. all will play a role in this joint decision.

Use of shared spaces (entry ways, restrooms) shall be carefully controlled to ensure social distancing occurs at all times. Floor markings, physical partitions or other safeguards shall be used. Non-essential shared spaces such as game rooms or dining areas should be closed.

Simultaneous use of outdoor activity space is permissible if social distancing can be maintained between groups. Facilities are encouraged to partition available space to allow for increased outdoor activities. Individuals and staff must wash their hands upon returning to the facility.

Food, Supplies and Personal Belongings

For the initial period of day program re-opening, communal sharing of food such as hot buffet/cafeteria lines and family style meals will not be permitted. As such, the provider should encourage individuals to bring their own lunch. If an individual does not arrive to program with a lunch the provider would still be expected to provide them a pre-packaged meal. Individuals shall remain with their cohort for meals and snacks. Meals and snacks shall be provided in the area where groups are regularly situated to avoid congregating in large groups. The use of disposable plates, cups and utensils by the day provider are required.

When staff are handling food, gloves must be worn and there should not be contact with food surfaces. If meals must be provided in a lunchroom: mealtimes must be staggered; tables arranged to ensure that there is at least six feet of space between groups and people within groups who do not live together can socially distance; and tables are to be cleaned between groups. The provider must ensure proper supervision during meals is provided.

Sharing of supplies and other items must be strictly limited. Facilities shall ensure adequate activity supplies to preclude the need for sharing of items. If items must be shared, they shall be used by one group at a time and cleaned and disinfected between uses. Individual's belongings shall be kept separate in individual storage bins/cubbies and sent home each day for washing.

Transportation

It is recommended that transportation to and from the day services setting be provided by families, guardians, or caretakers for individuals living in their own/family home, and the residential provider for individuals living within a provider managed residential setting until/unless the day services provider is able to meet social distancing standards within the vehicle.

In the event that the parent, guardian, caretaker, or residential provider staff are unable to provide transportation, the day services provider should do their best to accommodate. However, they will communicate that transportation constraints may delay/limit the ability for the individual to return to day services at the point at which they are ready to do so, on the days/during the shifts they prefer.

When transportation by the day services provider is provided, individuals shall be screened for fever and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to entry onto the vehicle. The driver can deny transportation to a day program if the individual is demonstrating symptoms or otherwise is identified as presenting a COVID risk. A record of all screenings shall be maintained.

The provider will make every effort to provide transportation based on the small groups of individuals that have been organized. The number of individuals within the vehicle shall be limited in order to maintain social distancing (e.g. one rider per seat in every other row). When feasible, partitions may be installed between riders in order to minimize risk – particularly for individuals who cannot tolerate face coverings that cover the nose and mouth.

Procedures shall be implemented to prevent crowding at pick up and drop off, including staggering these times. Modifications for inclement weather shall be implemented when necessary. Day programs shall prohibit entry of those picking up individuals into the facility. Instead, walk the individual outside the building to their transportation.

Commonly touched surfaces in the vehicle shall be cleaned and disinfected at the end of each run and the entire vehicle thoroughly cleaned after each round of pick up and drop off, especially after the last use of the day. Drivers will wear face coverings that cover the nose and mouth at all times and follow CDC guidelines – social distancing, hand washing, etc.

Visitation

Visitation in the center shall be strictly limited during operating hours with the exception of emergency medical services or law enforcement personnel acting in their official capacity, personnel from the Department of Human Services and/or Division of Developmental Disabilities. With the exception of an emergency medical services or law enforcement as described above, all visitors shall be required to undergo screening prior to entry and will be required to wear a cloth face covering that covers the nose and mouth and maintain proper social distancing at all times.

Routine or annual meetings shall take place virtually until advised otherwise. Persons providing maintenance or repair services, prospective admissions, prospective employees or service providers shall be required to visit the facility outside of operating hours.

Activities

Activities that are likely to bring individuals into close contact shall not occur. For example, games and sports involving direct physical contact or shared equipment should be replaced with no contact activities or sports. Group composition, size and staffing will comply with [Total Number of Individuals Served, Group Sizes and Social Distancing](#) section of this document.

Community outings and other off-site activities may occur with guardian approval, as long as the designated venue has been [cleared to open by the New Jersey Department of Health](#) and that venue's COVID-19 requirements are met. CDC guidelines related to social distancing shall be maintained. Face coverings may be required depending on the community venue as per Executive Order 163⁵ (or more current Executive Order). This will impact an individual's participation if they do not tolerate or are otherwise unable to wear a face covering. Documentation of outings must be maintained by the provider and available for review which shall include: date of outing; name(s) of individual(s) attending; name(s) of staff attending; name and address of venue; and the arrival and departure time.

Enhanced Cleaning and Sanitation Procedures

Facilities shall increase the frequency of cleaning equipment and surfaces, especially doorknobs, light switches, countertops, and restrooms during operating hours. Alcohol wipes should be used to clean keyboards and electronics. Frequent hand washing should be encouraged. Facilities shall clean, sanitize, and disinfect frequently touched surfaces as well as and shared objects multiple times per day and between use. If groups of individuals are moving from one area to another in shifts, cleaning measures must be completed prior to the new group entering the area.

Complete cleaning shall occur at end of each day. Cleaning shall be in accordance with the CDC's [Guidance for Cleaning & Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes](#) using Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [approved disinfectants](#) for use against COVID-19.

⁵ <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-163.pdf>

Items that individuals have placed in their mouths or are contaminated by body secretion or excretion shall be set aside until they are cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves. Clean with water and detergent, rinse, sanitize with an EPA approved disinfectant and air-dry or clean in a mechanical dishwasher. Some individuals may mouth objects throughout the day; these objects typically belong to him/her and stay with them if that is the case.

Facilities shall ensure that HVAC systems continue to be maintained and operational. To the extent practicable, windows should be opened frequently to allow fresh air flow, and HVAC systems should be adjusted to allow for more fresh air to enter the facility.

For additional guidance on the cleaning and disinfection of rooms or areas that those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 have visited, please review [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#).

Response Procedures for COVID-19 Symptoms or Exposure

If an individual or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 at the facility (e.g. fever of 100.4, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, sneezing, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea), immediately separate them from the others in an isolation area until they are picked up by their caregiver. If symptoms are felt to be immediately life threatening 911 shall be called.

The program shall contact the symptomatic individual's caretaker and arrange for their transport home. The staff waiting with the individual shall wear their face covering. Social distancing shall be maintained as practical. The caregiver picking the individual up shall be advised to contact a healthcare professional and have them evaluated for COVID-19. If the individual presented with a fever of over 100.4 and other symptoms the facility will require a negative test for COVID-19 and doctor's note before their return. Advise them to inform the facility immediately if the person tests positive for COVID-19.

Facilities shall immediately notify their local health department of any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 occurring in a day service center. Facilities shall also cooperate with their local health department related to any contact tracing that may be needed. After that notification, confirmed cases of COVID-19 must also be reported to the Division through established [Unusual Incident Reporting Procedures](#).

All rooms and equipment used by potentially infected person(s) shall be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). Facilities uncertain about the extent of potential exposure shall clean and sanitize all rooms.

Individual or Staff Members Who Test Positive for COVID-19

Facilities that become aware of a COVID-19 positive case at their facility shall contact their [local health department](#) for guidance. Facilities shall also cooperate with their local health department related to any contact tracing that may be needed.

Health officials will provide direction on whether a center should cease operations following the identification of a positive case in the facility. The duration may be dependent on staffing levels, outbreak levels in the community and severity of illness in the infected individual. Symptom-free individuals and staff should not attend or work at another facility during the closure unless cleared to do so by the local health department.

The facility shall immediately inform individuals, guardians and staff if they have been in close contact (Within six feet for 10 minutes or more) with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 while attending the day program.

All rooms and equipment used by infected person(s) shall be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). Facilities uncertain about the extent of potential exposure shall clean and sanitize all rooms.

Returning to Program After COVID-19 Diagnosis or Exposure

If a staff member or individual tests positive for or exposure to COVID-19 has been confirmed by a healthcare professional, they cannot return until the criteria for lifting transmission based precautions and home isolation⁶ have been met **and** they have been cleared to end isolation by a healthcare professional. The facility shall require a doctor's note before re-admission.

Questions or Concerns

Questions or concerns on the content, interpretation or application of this guidance can be directed to the Division of Developmental Disabilities at 1-800-832-9173 or DDD.COVID-19@dhs.nj.gov.

⁶ www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID-QuickRef_Discont_Isolation_and_TBP.pdf