



# Congregate Day Program Re-Opening Requirements **EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY**

June 16, 2021

## Introduction

Congregate day programs - including programs for persons with Traumatic Brain Injury - are directed to reopen at full capacity if all criteria contained in this document are met. Given the present staffing shortages, providers will need time to obtain enough staff to operate at full capacity. Further, providers of day services for medically involved persons may elect to limit capacity for a period of time before moving to full enrollment and or enact additional protocols based on the health needs of participants.

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 transmission of COVID-19, or one of its variants, will not occur. Individuals, families/guardians, and providers must monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. If an individual is positive for COVID-19 or unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated\* and has been exposed to COVID-19, they are not permitted to attend a day program until cleared by a medical professional.

Providers are permitted to inquire about vaccination status of participants, visitors and staff so long as they follow all privacy requirements and are in compliance with HIPAA protections, (e.g., do not ask the status in front of other others) and any other applicable federal or state laws. Visitors are not required to provide this information. If vaccination status is unknown then it is to be assumed that the person is not vaccinated. Providers may establish their own policies regarding staff vaccination.

\*People are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19  $\geq 2$  weeks after they have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or  $\geq 2$  weeks after they have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson and Johnson [J&J]/Janssen).

## Background Rationale and Evidence for Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People<sup>1</sup>

COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized in the United States are effective against COVID-19, including severe disease. Preliminary evidence suggests that the currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines may provide some protection against a variety of SARS-CoV-2 strains. A growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people are less likely to have asymptomatic infection and potentially less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others. Further investigation is ongoing.

The risks of COVID-19 infection in fully vaccinated people cannot be completely eliminated as long as there is continued community transmission of the virus. Vaccinated people could potentially still get COVID-19 and spread it to others. At this time, there is limited data on vaccine protection in people who are immunocompromised. People with immunocompromising conditions, including those taking immunosuppressive medications, should discuss the need for personal protective measures after vaccination with their healthcare provider.

## Ventilation

The facility shall ensure proper ventilation as follows:

- Make sure indoor spaces are well-ventilated (for example, open windows or doors when doing so does not pose a safety or health risk to building occupants) and large enough to accommodate physical distancing.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible both in the facility as well as any vehicles used by the facility.
- Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system.
- 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.

## Screening and Admittance

All individuals, staff, contracted professionals, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, must be cleared for admittance

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/fully-vaccinated-people.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fmore%2Ffully-vaccinated-people.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/fully-vaccinated-people.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fmore%2Ffully-vaccinated-people.html)

to the facility through screening, including temperature checks, as outlined in the [Residential and Day Program Screening Policy](#). The only exception to required screening is for first responders entering the program. Providers should make employee and participant health screenings as private as possible to protect health information as well as prevent stigma and discrimination.

In all instances, screening must occur in an accessible designated area that accommodates physical 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 sheltered to allow utilization during inclement weather. In-vehicle screening is permissible. Screening for fever and signs of COVID-19 also must occur before entry onto an agency vehicle during pick up. The driver or other program staff can deny transportation to a day program if an individual is demonstrating symptoms. A record of all screenings shall be maintained.

### **Face Coverings, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and Physical Distancing**

All staff, regardless of vaccination status, must continue to wear a well-fitted face mask when working, unless doing so would create a risk to workplace health, safety or job duty as assessed by the employer, and physically distance (as appropriate for the care of residents) when working with participants and other staff.

If all participants and staff in a group are fully vaccinated, participants and staff may choose to remove their mask and may have close contact with others in the group without a mask.

If a group contains one or more unvaccinated staff or participant, ALL staff in the group MUST mask and socially distance from unvaccinated persons as appropriate for the care of the participant(s). Participants in the group *who are able* MUST wear a well-fitted face mask and unvaccinated participants should physically distance from others in the group.

If vaccination status cannot be determined for all group participants, the safest practice is for all participants to follow all recommended infection prevention and control practices including maintaining physical distancing and wearing a well-fitted face mask.

Fully vaccinated program participants can elect not to wear a mask when outdoors. Fully vaccinated staff can elect not to wear a mask when outdoors if the participants in the group they are working with are fully vaccinated.

All individual program participants who are not fully vaccinated shall be encouraged by the staff to wear a well-fitted face mask. 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 who are not fully vaccinated for whom it is not medically contraindicated should be encouraged to wear a well-fitted face mask which covers the nose and mouth within the facility and/or in the agency vehicle. Individual participants wearing face coverings should also be reminded frequently not to touch the face covering.

This guidance recognizes that some individuals who are not fully vaccinated may not understand the importance of physical distancing (being at least six feet apart while at day program) from those who they do not live with. However, individuals who are not fully vaccinated should be encouraged to physically distance to lessen COVID-19 exposure risk. Groups shall physically distance from other groups.

### **Promoting Healthy Hygiene Practices**

Facilities shall teach and reinforce the practice of frequent and proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (e.g. covering coughs and sneezes<sup>2</sup>) among individuals and staff. Staff shall perform hand hygiene 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.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing\\_sneezing.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html)

Regardless of vaccination status, staff must wear proper PPE when providing physical assistance for an individual's personal care needs. 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 matter<sup>3</sup>. Staff shall change the individual's clothes when soiled. All contaminated clothes should be safely contained and stored in a plastic bag or safely contained and transported to the laundry area (if available) and washed per policy and procedure. Areas and equipment used during assistance with personal care needs shall be cleaned and sanitized after each use.

### **Total Number of Individuals Served and Group Sizes**

Group sizes shall no longer be limited but is recommended to be 15 or fewer individuals and that, to the extent practicable, that the same group composition be maintained. 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.

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 physical distancing.

Simultaneous use of outdoor activity space is permissible. Facilities are encouraged to partition available space to allow for increased outdoor activities. Prioritize outdoor activities over indoor activities when possible. Staff should ensure sun safety for all participants. Individuals and staff must wash their hands upon returning to the facility.

### **Transportation**

Individuals (regardless of vaccination status) transported by the day services provider shall be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to entering the vehicle and conduct temperature screen prior to entering the vehicle. The driver or other program staff can deny transportation to a day program if the individual is demonstrating symptoms. A record of all screenings shall be maintained.

The provider will provide transportation in the safest manner possible to reduce transmission of COVID-19. This includes having staff wear a well-fitted face mask and providing ventilation through the opening of windows and use of vehicle HVAC systems to circulate fresh air. Standard vehicle occupancy can be used. If all participants and staff on a vehicle are fully vaccinated, masking is not required. If one or more participants or staff on the vehicle are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated/vaccination status unknown all participants who are able must wear a well-fitted face mask during the trip – especially those who are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated/vaccination status unknown. In this circumstance, it is *recommended* that vehicle capacity be limited to one rider per row. The day program provider must make participants and their caretaker(s) aware of the risks associated with congregate transportation for unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated/persons with vaccination status unknown in relation to contracting COVID-19.

Transportation staff and drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other day program staff (e.g., hand hygiene, masks). Ensure each vehicle is equipped with cleaning and disinfecting supplies that are stored in a safe manner, readily accessible to only the driver and transportation staff. 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/drop off, especially after the last use of the day.

### **Visitation**

Visitation in the center shall be limited during operating hours to those that are essential to operations (maintenance or repair services, prospective admissions, prospective employees, planning team meetings, etc.). Routine or annual meetings shall take place virtually when possible and appropriate. Exceptions remain for 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 visiting the facility. 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

<sup>3</sup> [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Spread](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Spread)

wear a well-fitted face mask that covers the nose and mouth and maintain proper physical distancing at all times.

## Activities

Activities that are likely to bring individuals who are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated into close contact shall be limited. Community outings and other off-site activities may occur with guardian approval. 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.

## Response Procedures for COVID-19 Symptoms

Regardless of vaccination status, if an individual or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 at the facility immediately separate them from the others in an isolation area until they depart from the program. The program shall contact the individual's emergency contact and arrange for their transport home.

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 the sick person(s) shall be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with [CDC guidance](#).

## Individuals or Staff Members Who Test Positive or Report Exposure to COVID-19

Facilities that become aware of a COVID-19 positive case or exposure at their facility shall contact their [local health department](#) to inquire if they should continue to operate or close. Additionally, the agency will be required to provide notification to their PPMU liaison via phone or email [DDD.PPMU@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.PPMU@dhs.nj.gov) of positive staff and individuals as they become aware.

Health officials will provide direction on whether a center should cease operations following the identification of a positive case or exposure in the facility. The facility shall immediately inform individuals, guardians and staff if they have been in close contact ( $\geq 15$  cumulative minutes within 24-hours) with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 while attending the day program.

All rooms and equipment used by the sick person(s) shall be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with [CDC guidance](#).

## Returning to Program After COVID-19 Diagnosis or Exposure<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of vaccination status, if a staff member or participant tests positive for COVID-19, they cannot return until the criteria for lifting transmission based precautions and home isolation<sup>5</sup> have been met **and** they have been cleared to end isolation by a healthcare professional. The facility may require a doctor's note before re-admission.

Fully vaccinated staff/participants who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and who are asymptomatic should not be restricted from work/program for 14 days following their exposure. Additionally, those asymptomatic staff/residents who have recovered from COVID-19 infection in the prior three months should follow the same guidance.

If a participant who is unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated has been exposed ( $\geq 15$  cumulative minutes within 24-hours of someone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19) they cannot return to program for 14 days following the last day of that exposure.

## 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](mailto:DDD.COVID-19@dhs.nj.gov).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html>

<sup>5</sup> [www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID-QuickRef\\_Discont\\_Isolation\\_and\\_TBP.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID-QuickRef_Discont_Isolation_and_TBP.pdf)