



Vannessa Dorantes
Commissioner

DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities

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HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106



Ned Lamont
Governor

To: DCF Contracted Providers
From: Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner
Date: March 13, 2020
Subject: COVID-19 **Continuity of Operations**

As you are aware, our nation is facing a pandemic the likes of which most of us have never experienced. It is our highest priority at the Department that [we work together effectively with all of you during this crisis to protect the health and safety of all our Connecticut residents, including the children and families we serve as well as the staff who serve them.](#)

As I and my team work to identify mitigation plans and develop continuity plans for our children and families, it is of the utmost importance that we communicate with our contract provider network and those community partners who work with us serving our children and families on a daily basis.

Please feel assured that the Department is committed to the on-going operations of our community partners. To that end, we are actively exploring the possibility of an early release of provider 4th quarter payments. If we are able to release these payments prior to April 1st, we will do so. Further, payment will be made in full for the 4th quarter, and the Department will, within contracted and budgetary allocations, pay for all expenses incurred during this time period, as detailed on the provider's Annual Financial Report at the end of the fiscal year, so long as providers adhere to the requirements detailed below. The Department also is actively working with the Department of Social Services to determine the ability of providers to bill for third-party reimbursement should the venue of service provision be temporarily modified (i.e. if in-home services are approved for temporary provision through Skype/teleconference/etc.), although no determination has been made on this issue at this time.

While more information may be forthcoming, and while our direction to our contracted partners may evolve in the coming weeks, effective immediately, please be advised of the following regarding the Department's expectation of its service providers:

1. Congregate (Residential) Programs

- All Continuity of Operation Plans (COOP Plans) must be reviewed and updated as necessary;
- It is the Department's expectation that programs continue to maintain operations in accordance with the terms of the Department's contract/licensing requirements;
- It is the Department's expectation that minimum staffing coverage, as defined per contract/licensing requirements, be maintained;
- If such staffing cannot be maintained, the provider must immediately notify Joshonda Guerrier (Joshonda.Guerrier@ct.gov / 860 817-4659) for direction on how to proceed; and
- If a resident becomes symptomatic, the provider must immediately notify Joshonda Guerrier (Joshonda.Guerrier@ct.gov / 860 817-4659) for direction on how to proceed.

2. Group Treatment Service Programs

- It is the Department's expectation that providers continue to accept referrals from Department staff and the community (where contractually defined);
- It is the Department's expectation that services continue to be provided within the scope of the provider's contract; and
- It is the Department's expectation that minimum staffing coverage, as defined per contract requirements, be maintained.

3. In-Home Service Programs

- In addition to the requirements defined in #2 above, it is the Department's expectation that providers utilize the attached verbal screening prior to entering any home. If such screening reveals any positive answers, the provider may postpone service delivery and notify the referral source of such postponement.

If, as an agency, providers determine that risk factors require a deviation from the standard of service required per contract (i.e. modification of in-home services to mobile teleconferencing/telecommuting where shared space is a contract requirement/suspension

of services completely/ etc.), the **provider is required to obtain approval from the Department prior to implementing such modifications**. In these cases, the provider must submit a request, in writing, to Melanie Sparks (Melanie.Sparks@ct.gov / 860 978-6592). Such request must identify the program(s) being impacted, the deviation being requested, the anticipated client impact, and the anticipated length of the deviation. The Department will review each request and will respond with its decision no more than twenty-four (24) hours after receipt of the request.

It is my commitment that the Department will remain a good and collaborative partner during this unprecedented time as we balance the continuity of services for our vulnerable population with the health and safety of all Connecticut residents, including your staff. To the fullest extent possible, the Department will work cooperatively with our provider partners consistent with our shared responsibility to Connecticut's children and their families.

Please attempt to remain apprised of the State's evolving emergency management plans as they evolve. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Melanie Sparks. Thank you for your on-going support and partnership.