



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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Governor

Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner

Peter Mason
Deputy Commissioner

To: DDS Providers

From: Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner

Cc: Peter Mason, Deputy Commissioner; Katie Rock-Burns, Chief of Staff; David David, Director of Service Development and Support; Ken Cabral, Director of Family Services Strategy; Amber Burke, Director of Employment and Day Services

Date: June 10, 2020

RE: Reopening of Employment and Day Services

As noted in the [reopening timeline memo](#) issued on June 5, 2020, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has worked with stakeholders to develop a process that provides context and guidance to reopen our employment and day services with a phase-based approach.

DDS has worked closely with individuals and families to gather feedback on what they would like the reopening of employment and day services to look like. One of the methods to solicit this feedback was through the use of a survey issued to individuals and families. We were delighted to have over 1,730 people respond with critical detail that was used to help develop the guidance presented later in this memo. An infographic provided separately summarizes the results of the survey. We want to take a moment to thank everyone who participated.

DDS also coordinated a focused stakeholder committee made up of employment and day providers and DDS staff. The goal of this committee was to use the results of the survey to plan out a comprehensive and safe approach to reopening the employment and day service delivery system.

Reopening Guidance

Following this memo, you will find the approved process and guidance for employment and day providers to begin moving forward with the reopening process. **The process includes a requirement for providers to submit an agency based, person centered plan that would phase in reopening.**

The guidance maintains the importance of protecting the health and safety of individuals and staff while also utilizing a person-centered process to create flexibility as we all adapt to a new way of business. We ask that providers be creative and flexible in the development of these plans and consider an array of service delivery options.

Please read the attached guidance carefully and utilize the link provided below to access the template to submit your plan.

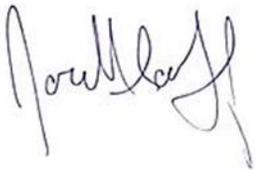
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The timeline for provider plan development is as follows:

- All provider plans must be submitted utilizing the above link by June 19, 2020.
- DDS will review all plans and send a response to the provider by June 26, 2020.
- Teams to meet between June 29, 2020 with the effective date to begin phase 1 on July 15, 2020.
- Individuals may start as soon as the provider is able to provide the service needed.

For questions about the reopening process or guidelines outlined in the following attachments please contact: DDS.Employment-DayServices@ct.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan A. Scheff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner
Department of Developmental Services

Everyone's re-entry into the workforce is a person-centered decision. DDS encourages individuals, families, and our providers to access the Connecticut COVID-19 resources page at <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus> and the DDS website for specific information for individuals, families and our provider community at <https://portal.ct.gov/dds>. These websites are comprehensive and include information regarding the re-opening of Connecticut and the guidance still in effect for all citizens of Connecticut. An additional resource of information is also found at the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/>.

As DDS begins to partner with our stakeholders to develop plans to reopen our employment and day service delivery system, our focus will remain on the health and safety for the people we support, their families, the direct care professionals, and all the staff in various professions that make up our community. We anticipate this process will be slow and deliberate and will build on the creativity, innovation, and laser focus on the person and their family. We anticipate our reopening of employment and day services will be organic in nature and will follow along with the reopening of Connecticut plans.

This document offers guidance to our provider community to develop plans for the reopening of their service array within the context of the rules and restrictions in effect for the state. Each community is unique, therefore reopening strategies will vary based on the level of community transmission, as well as the characteristics of the community and the population the provider serves.

DDS Guidance for Providers on Employment and Day Services Re-Opening

- Providers develop plans within the context of this guidance.
- Process needs to be person-centered and will be flexible based on the ability for providers to meet the needs of the person.
- DDS has developed a phased reopening as follows:

During the phased reopening providers will be reimbursed with an enhanced payment method. The enhanced payment will include a base payment which is the billed units paid at the providers existing rate and an enhanced payment. The enhanced payment will reimburse providers for unbilled services. Unbilled services will be calculated by applying a utilization factor to monthly authorized units less billed units. The department will reduce the utilization factor in each phase. The calculation for the enhanced payment is included below.

Payment = Rate * (Billed Units + (Authorized Units – Billed Units) * Utilization Factor)

- Phase 1 – soft opening beginning July 15, 2020. Providers are to make available the opportunity to support all DDS funded individuals with either electronic or virtual face to face supports and provide a minimum of one hour of service at least three days per week to those who are willing to participate. In addition, providers will support at least 50% of the DDS funded individuals in their agency for no less than 50% of the person's weekly service hours. This will be inclusive of all service delivery options framed out in the waiver and appendix K.

Providers may submit a reopening plan for less than the 50% of the DDS funded individuals because of the inability to accommodate the physical space requirements of social distancing and/or individuals identified as unwilling to participate in any offered programming.

Providers that choose this option will not receive a higher utilization factor than those that meet the required 50% support hours.

- Phase 2 – after 45 days (approx. September 1, 2020). Providers are to make available the opportunity to support all DDS funded individuals with either electronic or virtual face to face supports and provide a minimum of one hour of service five days per week to those who are willing to participate. Providers will support at least 75% of the DDS funded individuals in their agency for no less than 75% of the person's weekly service hours. This will be inclusive of all service delivery options framed out in the waiver and appendix K.

Providers may submit a reopening plan for less than the 75% of the DDS funded individuals because of the inability to accommodate the physical space requirements of social distancing and/or individuals identified as unwilling to participate in any offered programming.

Providers that choose this option will not receive a higher utilization factor than those that meet the required 75% support hours.

Moving to this phase will be based on benchmarks that may include but are not limited to:

- # of cases (increase-decrease-stable)
- # of new cases (increase-decrease-stable)
- # of tests administered (increase-decrease-stable)
- amount of testing available
- Geographical location and regional spread data
- Rate of virus transmission data

- Phase 3 full opening after 30 days (approx. October 1, 2020) 100% capacity, based on above benchmarks.

- Each provider has a commitment to everyone they serve and will provide some level of service to each person during phase 1, if the person and family agree to the service delivery. This is inclusive of all the varying degrees of contact allowed throughout the COVID 19 crisis.
- Providers will submit plans through the above online template. The provider's primary region and Resource Administrator will engage in a review and facilitate a conversation with the provider to determine a mutual agreement on next steps.
- Providers will reach out to the Case Managers of the people identified in each phase to help coordinate a virtual team meeting. The agreed upon provider plan will determine the timeline to return to day services, during which phase, and the interim services the individual will receive. This will include a detailed plan for the person's program – staggered times, days, a mixed variety of supports (virtual supports, face to face, in home, at day site).
- The above team meetings will be noted in case notes. If there are adjustments needed to amend the authorization the case manager will update the IP and facilitate the changes to the authorization.
- Providers' plans will include when they will begin to incorporate graduates and age outs.
- Provider plans will identify procedure/process to determine expectations of the individual, family, and/or residential provider prior to sending people to day services. This will incorporate health and safety expectations of signs and symptoms identification, temperature review, and communication.

- Flexibility and latitude offered through the approved Appendix K for waiver services will remain in place throughout the phased in process of reopening.
- Transportation should be addressed in each plan. Details should include availability throughout each phase, cleaning and sanitizing, use of PPE, and number of people in the vehicle at any given time. Both individuals and staff. More on this later in the guidance.
- Provider plans shall include a process for contact tracing, should a staff person or individual test positive for COVID-19. This is an opportunity to help protect our families, friends, co-workers, and broader communities from further spread of the virus.

Future considerations:

1. Including Virtual supports in our waiver
2. Include in-home supports as part of day and employment delivery system
3. Include a blend of in home and site-based day supports
4. Include flexibility regarding days and times

When developing a reopening plan, it is important to incorporate strategies to ensure the safety and social wellbeing of the people we support. The recommendations contained within this document are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and serve as a guide in the development of providers reopening plans.

The plans need to include responses in the following areas:

- Preparation of the environment by cleaning and disinfecting;
- A health screening process;
- Establishing safe infection control practices including social distancing and effective hand hygiene; and
- Establishing a routine that allows for sustained vigilance.

Employment Service Array

There is an organic process occurring as it relates to people who have integrated, competitive employment. As Connecticut rolls out the business re-opening plans people we support will begin to be called back to work in both individual supported employment and group supported employment. The person and their team need to meet to discuss the health and safety concerns related to the person returning to work. As this occurs employment and day staff are also returning to work to support individuals as they reenter the workforce. We must acknowledge that several people we support have continued to work at their place of employment as they were deemed essential employees and have continued to receive the supports from our provider community throughout the pandemic.

- As businesses reopen – individuals being called back to work will require ISE/GSE providers to provide the employment services authorized to your agency. We have designed a tool for teams to use to facilitate a discussion as people are called back to work.

- All employment services ISE, GSE, and IDV and individualized day supports staff should be reassigned back to employment and day service to begin planning the return to employment services as businesses reopen. Providers should target implementation and roll out by July 15, 2020.
- Group Supported Employment (specific to provider facility-based employment), Prevocational, and Transition Services may be continued/increased with the following recommended limits:
 - GSE based at a community employer follow the rules set for the opening if the industry.
 - GSE should consist of no more than five (5) individuals and three (3) staff per group.
 - More people in a GSE, as defined above, may meet in the same building, if the individuals and staff are always separated (e.g. on separate floors, on separate sides of the building), AND do not use the same entrances, exits, hallways, bathrooms, cooking facilities, transportation vehicles or the Providers has strict cleaning and sanitizing protocols for entrances/exits, hallways, bathrooms, cooking facilities and vehicles between use that are monitored for adherence.
 - DDS recommends no sharing of staff between groups, except in the case of an urgent situation and to maintain minimum staffing levels to ensure health and safety.
 - Social distancing and hygiene guidelines should be followed whenever possible.
 - All transportation vehicles must be cleaned after each use.
 - All transportation vehicles must be deep cleaned at least once a week.
 - If a vehicle is to be used for individuals other than the assigned GSE group, the vehicle must be deep cleaned each time it is to be used by different staff and individuals.

Providers should include in their plans if they are providing GSE services that are more liberal than noted above.

- Providers who hold contracts may begin planning for the initiation of providing those services again if they fall in line with the Governors Phase 1 re opening CT plan. On May 20, 2020 the following is opening within tight restrictions - Museums and Zoos – outdoor only, Offices, Restaurants (outdoor only), and retail & malls. <https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Coronavirus-Business-Recovery/Sector-Rules-and-Certification-for-Reopen>

Phasing in Day Services Options (DSO) Array in Congregate Settings

Workplace COVID-19 safety plans must be approved by DDS Resource Management prior to phasing in Employment and Day activities. Please include the following in your COVID-19 reopening plans:

- COVID-19 training plan for staff and implementation of precautionary measures including sanitization, handwashing and use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Explain your messaging approach (i.e. posters/signs) to encourage hand hygiene and how to stop the spread including at the entrance to your workplace, in workstations and the center, in general. Include an action plan for when an employee or person you support develops symptoms while at work.
- Social distancing plans including any environmental modifications. Address group sizes and plans to maintain gatherings of 8 or fewer (participants and staff). Agencies may serve more than 8 individuals as long as the environmental modifications meet all safety measures outlined in this plan.
- Staggering plans for arrivals, departures, meals and break times.
- Plan for health checks before admittance of staff, visitors, and people you support including temperature checks and symptoms of cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, etc.
- Communication plans for reporting possible exposure, development of symptoms, suspected and confirmed cases. If someone is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers must inform fellow employees and attendees of their possible exposure while maintaining confidentiality.

- Plan for when someone becomes symptomatic at the worksite. Plan for as needed, short-term closures due to exposure and to allow for cleaning and contact tracing.
- Flexible mitigation strategies to be scaled up or down depending on the evolving local COVID-19 impact.

Transportation

Providers need to include in their plan the availability of transportation throughout each phase, the number of people being offered transportation, and the logistics of providing transportation including cleaning and disinfection of non-emergency transport vehicles.

Non-emergency transport vehicles are often utilized to transport individuals to and from community activities. These vehicles and the staff operating the vehicles may interact with dozens of individuals throughout the day, allowing for the potential spread of infection. As with other public spaces, routine cleaning and disinfection is recommended to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The CDC recommends all individuals (including the driver) wear cloth face coverings while in a non-emergency transport vehicle.

Consider implementing the following recommendations when developing a reopening plan:

- Clean and disinfect vehicles, at a minimum twice daily (beginning and end of each day) and when visibly soiled or after transporting individual by the same principles recommended in the guidance from DDS.
- Cleanse and disinfect commonly touched surfaces such as door handles, seat belts in the vehicle, after each transport.
- Ensure cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed correctly to include proper use of chemicals, adequate ventilation when cleaning the vehicle, and PPE compatibility with cleaning products.
- Gloves and other disposable PPE used for cleaning and disinfecting the vehicle should be removed and disposed of after cleaning, followed by proper hand hygiene.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Provider will include the use of PPE for staff and individuals throughout each phase. A training plan for staff and individuals on PPE and the use of PPE. Plans will incorporate the use and distribution of PPE pursuant to the guidance issued by DDS. All up to date PPE guidance can be found on the [DDS website](#) under “[COVID-19 Update for Providers](#)” and the subsection titled “Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)”

Social Distancing

Social distancing is a means of keeping space between yourself and other individuals. COVID-19 spreads mainly among individuals within close contact (6 feet) of one another for prolonged periods of time.

Consider implementing the following recommendations when developing a reopening plan:

- Maintain 6 feet distance from others.
- Arrange seating of chairs and tables to be least 6 feet apart during shared meals or other events.

The Provider plan needs to incorporate how they will support social distancing in any congregate setting.

Note: When supporting individuals requiring assistance during mealtimes (to avoid incidents of choking or to address PICA); providers are to consider the ability to adhere to social distancing and PPE recommendations intended to mitigate spread.

Considerations:

- Install physical barriers, changing the layout of current workspace, and/or closing communal spaces.
- Reduce size of gatherings.
- Alter schedules to reduce mixing (e.g. arrival/departure times, stagger meals/activities)
- Limit non-essential, outside guests/volunteers from entering the program.
- Limit visitors and implement screening procedures.
- Make sure that shared rooms in the facility have good air flow from an air conditioner or an opened window.
- Minimize traffic in enclosed spaces, such as elevators and stairwells. Consider limiting the number of individuals in an elevator at one time and designating one directional stairwell, if possible.
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, or eating utensils. Non-disposable food service items used should be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Wash hands after handling used food service items.