To:    Employers of Record, Individuals Who Self-Direct Services, DDS Public, Qualified Providers

From:  Dr. Valencia Bagby-Young, Director of Health and Clinical Services

CC:    Jordan Scheff, Commissioner; Peter Mason, Deputy Commissioner; Katie Rock-Burns, Chief of Staff; IFS Managers; Self Determination Directors; Regional Directors; Regional Health Services Directors

Date:  April 17, 2020

Re:     Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance for Individual and Family Supports (IFS), Individualized Home Supports (IHS), and Self-Directed Supports

This memo is intended to offer clarification on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required during close contact care (defined as a proximity of less than 6-feet for a prolonged period of time, which constitutes any exposure greater than a few minutes) for all individuals, including those diagnosed with Coronavirus (COVID-19) or identified as Person(s) Under Investigation (PUI), which means a person exhibiting systems of COVID-19.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on COVID-19 is evolving/changing on a daily basis. The current CDC and Department of Public Health (DPH) guidelines recommend that everyone wear a face mask or face covering whenever in public or any place other than your own home, to help reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. CDC and DPH recommend that all staff providing services to individuals in residential settings or in the person’s own home should wear a face mask or, if surgical masks are unavailable, cloth face covering at all times. Any PPE requested and/or provided by DDS are only for use by support staff and Health Care Coordination qualified registered nurses providing DDS funded services to individuals.

For cases in which an individual has experienced COVID-19 related symptoms which may include fever, cough, vomiting, diarrhea, sudden loss of taste and/or smell, and the person’s Healthcare Provider (Physician, Nurse Practitioner, Physician Assistant) has advised monitoring and/or COVID-19 testing this classifies the individual as a PUI. When someone is a PUI they should be treated as if they are positive for COVID-19, until test results have been received; this will assist with efforts to decrease transmission.

For persons positive for COVID-19 or a PUI. if it is absolutely necessary for staff or nurses to enter the individual’s home to provide care, the recommendation from the CDC and DPH is that a surgical face mask, face shield or eye protection (i.e., eye goggles or safety glasses), gown, and gloves be worn prior to entering an area 6-feet from the COVID-19 positive individual or PUI. N95 masks are only recommended during aerosol producing treatments such as nurses providing care of a tracheostomy, suctioning an individual (this does not
include toothbrushing with suction), providing nebulizer treatments, assisting or when in the room with a person using a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) or BiPAP (bilevel positive airway pressure) machine for sleep apnea or other medical condition, and/or when administering CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) utilizing bag-mask ventilation (BMV or ambu-bag). If there is a need for staff to administer CPR, the use of Hands Only or Compression Only CPR is recommended. This is outlined in a separate DDS Hands Only CPR memo.

Please take some time to review additional COVID-19 related recommendations and documents available on the DDS website: https://portal.ct.gov/dds. The COVID-19 Update for Individuals and Families, and COVID-19 Update for DDS Providers sections on the website include the latest information available from DDS (i.e., FAQs, optimizing PPE, etc.) and is updated frequently.

CDC Resources:
