



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM E. DELPHIN-RITTMON, Ph.D.
COMMISSIONER

DRAFT MEMORANDUM

To: DMHAS Staff
From: Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D.
Date: May 15, 2020
Subject: DMHAS COVID-19 Staff Update

Recently, Governor Lamont's attention has been focused on "reopening" the state, pointing toward a phased reopening that would begin on May 20th. While essential services have remained open for business in the state throughout the pandemic, certain sectors have been closed and will be permitted to reopen on May 20th provided they meet certain safety standards. As the state prepares for this next step DMHAS staff are raising questions about how this impacts our work life. While DMHAS, like the state, has never "closed" we have been working differently. Some of our work has been through direct contact with clients and some of our work has happened through our teleworking. Regardless, I recognize that the work life of our staff has changed considerably during the pandemic and it is important to address how the state's reopening of certain sectors will affect our work lives. The sections below summarize how we will be working for the immediate future.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE and Safety Precautions)

At this time, the reopening will likely have little impact on how we are currently working. Our inpatient and residential services will continue to provide services in the same way they have provided them throughout the pandemic. The safety protocols we have put in place will remain as they are. Staff will continue to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the same way they have previously done. We continue to aggressively pursue and obtain PPE for our staff and for our non-profit providers. State staff who are not involved in direct care, possibly working at the Office of the Commissioner, will continue to wear masks in order to better protect themselves and others around them.

Testing of All DMHAS Staff

As I indicated earlier this week, we have already begun a process of testing all DMHAS staff for COVID-19. In two days, almost 200 CVH staff have been tested. **One modification I wanted to make clear is that DMHAS will receive individual test results in order to better**

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protect patients and staff. After my earlier correspondence regarding staff testing, there were additional negotiations with the unions which resulted in their agreeing to have individual results shared with DMHAS. The testing schedule will be evolving over the next several weeks. All staff will have the opportunity to be tested if they wish. The schedule, location for testing, and facility specific information will be shared as the process is solidified.

Teleworking

In a communication sent earlier today, the Governor has stressed that those who can work from home should continue to do that to the extent possible. While a separate correspondence is coming out that clarifies this, DMHAS does not intend to make changes to teleworking at this time. A separate communication will be sent by Yvonne Addo with additional information on telework extension. As the state ramps up on testing, we may gain greater experience with a phased approach to reopening but at least for the foreseeable future, we will proceed as we have been doing.

Interagency Planning

I have been working with other human service commissioners in order to plan a coordinated re-start. Each Commissioner agrees with the need for this joint planning because of the considerable amount of overlap between our agencies. While this is in an early planning stage, the goal of these meetings are to ensure that to the degree possible, there is consistency between the agencies as it relates to staff and service provision. As this process begins to clarify decisions related to re-starting our services, I will share that info with you.

Finally, I and all of our executive staff want to thank you for the immeasurable contributions you have made over the past several months. We have been able to maintain our core services while working to protect our patients and staff. I hope the worst is behind us and better days lie ahead. However, I am sure that many challenges remain. It is also clear that our fight against this virus will take longer than any of us originally anticipated. I am extremely thankful for all you have done on behalf of our clients.