



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

NED LAMONT  
GOVERNOR

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

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** DMHAS Staff  
**From:** Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D.  
**Date:** June 30, 2020  
**Subject:** DMHAS COVID-19 Staff Update #22

I am writing to update staff about several important issues relating to our efforts to return to more normal agency operations. I wanted to update you on the progress of our mandatory testing of direct care staff. Secondly, I am pleased to provide information about our decision to open visitation in our inpatient and residential facilities on a limited basis. These changes are helping us to resume more normal operations in our facilities. As always, our primary goal is to protect the safety and welfare of our clients and staff while adjusting operations during the pandemic.

**Mandatory Testing**

I notified staff on June 19<sup>th</sup> that certain DMHAS staff working in inpatient and residential settings were required to be tested in order to comply with a Governor's Executive Order. That order directed hospitals and state congregate living facilities to test direct care staff as well as non-direct care staff. I want to thank you in advance for your cooperation with the mandatory testing. We have been making significant progress as we continue to comply with the Governor's Order.

We identified approximately 2,300 staff that met the criteria for mandatory testing. DMHAS Human Resources will notify staff who are mandated for testing within the next few days. Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH) and River Valley Services (RVS) staff on the mandatory testing list will be retested; Whiting Forensic Hospital (WFH), Southwest Connecticut Mental Health System (SWCMHS) and the Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC) will continue with testing for staff that are identified for mandatory testing. The other DMHAS facilities will begin implementing testing in the near future as logistic arrangements are worked out. Public health experts continue to underscore the importance of testing as one of the primary tools for controlling the spread of the virus.

**Visitation in DMHAS Inpatient and Residential Facilities**

In early March, DMHAS temporarily restricted visitation in our inpatient and residential facilities. This was done in order to comply with guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH). In-person family and friend

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visitation has not been allowed over the past 3 months. Across the state and country, experts are indicating that visitation can resume under limited and tightly controlled circumstances. After considerable planning, I have decided visitation should resume in our inpatient and residential facilities. The importance of visitation for our patients cannot be stressed enough. Contact with family and significant others is an important component of recovery.

Visitation will be initiated safely by incorporating guidance from the DPH and CDC. Visits will have to be scheduled in advance and all visitors will be screened per the DMHAS screening protocol. Visits will take place during regular visiting hours and will be supervised to ensure that safety precautions are followed. Masks will be required to be worn at all times. Facilities have set aside outdoor space so visits can take place outside whenever possible. When this cannot occur due to weather or other conditions, each facility has set aside large indoor spaces where visitation can occur following social distancing guidelines. Facilities will begin notifying families of this change immediately. It is important to point out that legal representatives, clergy and conservators have always been able to visit on the inpatient units during the pandemic.

DMHAS will be carefully monitoring this change in procedure. We have made significant progress over the past month in controlling the virus among patients and staff. I do not want to jeopardize our successes but feel strongly that visitation can be slowly re-initiated in a manner that ensures continued safety. DMHAS will be providing a revised visitation guidance so families, patients and staff are clear about this change. I want to thank you in advance for your cooperation in both the mandatory testing and the change in visitation. These are important measures we are taking to help us slowly and safely move to a new normal.