



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: September 2, 2020
Subject: DMHAS COVID-19 Staff Update #25

As we move closer to Labor Day and the unofficial end of summer, I felt it was important to reflect on our journey over the past 6 months as we have worked to stop the spread of coronavirus. We have moved from a position where Connecticut was initially among the country's hotspots for the virus to a point where we are now viewed as having some of the lowest infection rates in the country. Governor Lamont's leadership and the collective efforts of all Connecticut residents has made us a leader in fighting the pandemic. We have seen parallels to this in our DMHAS service system.

DMHAS, like the state, worked to aggressively control the spread of COVID-19 in our inpatient and residential facilities. We saw instances where there were rising cases of patients and staff with COVID-19 and we are now at a point where there are no patients in our inpatient or residential system with COVID -19 and only a small number of staff that are infected. While most of the patients and staff recovered, we have mourned the loss of five individuals who were in our inpatient system. We must honor their memories while strengthening our efforts to prevent further losses. Your vigilance and hard work have brought us to a point where we are now controlling the spread of the pandemic. I am including some updates below as we continue our efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Updated Mask Guidelines

DMHAS has updated our guidelines related to masks. The update is related to concerns that patients in institutional settings could use masks to harm themselves. It simply indicates that ***"staff working on inpatient units should wear a surgical (or N95) mask. Hospitalized patients should be given surgical masks with ear loops with the metallic piece removed. Cloth masks should not be worn on inpatient units."*** The revised guidelines can be found at the following link: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DMHAS/COVID-19/Resources/DMHAS-Protocols-for-COVID-Q-and-I.pdf>

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Staff Testing

As staff may know, certain employees were required to be tested based on an agreement between the Office of Labor Relations and state unions. DMHAS was asked to provide a list of staff who should be tested based on their work duties. All DMHAS facilities have participated in the mandatory testing. As of last week, we had tested 4702 staff (includes staff tested more than once) within our facilities. Out of the total number tested, only 12 were found to be positive. Testing of all staff that are not on any type of leave has now been completed with 100% compliance. Staff that have been identified for testing that are now on leave will be required to complete testing when they return to work.

Self Quarantine Following Travel to States with High Infection Rates

DMHAS continues to require that staff who travel to states with high rates of COVID quarantine upon their return. As a reminder the list of states continues to change based on the most recent data available. Staff should check the following link to know which states have been designated as one of these states: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Covid-19-Knowledge-Base/Travel-In-or-Out-of-CT>

While we all have likely breathed a sigh of relief as COVID-19 case rates have declined, we cannot afford to relax. We must remain vigilant, ready to address any new clusters or hotspots that develop within our system. I am so grateful to our staff who have sacrificed a great deal during the pandemic. You were performing heroic acts every day as you worked to provide essential services to our clients. As we move closer toward Labor Day, I want to express my sincere thanks to all of our staff who labor tirelessly on behalf of our clients.