



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Ned Lamont
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner

Peter Mason
Deputy Commissioner

To: Individuals Supported by DDS, their Family Members and Legal Representatives

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

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

Date: 10/13/2021

Re: DDS COVID-19 Updated Guidance for Individuals and Families

Dear Individuals, Families and Legal Representatives,

The intent of this letter is to provide an update related to COVID-19 and to clarify questions that you may have.

How to Minimize COVID-19 Infection and Transmission

1. Get vaccinated.

Everyone 12-years and older should get a COVID-19 vaccination to help protect against COVID-19. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to strongly recommend that all eligible people receive the COVID-19 (also known as the SARS-CoV-2) vaccine as soon as possible. By getting vaccinated, you can protect family members and friends who are not eligible for the vaccine, such as children under 12-years old, and those who have weakened immune systems, such as people who are receiving chemotherapy, have recently had an organ transplant, or those who have chronic diseases.

Visit the website link below for vaccine eligibility and vaccination locations throughout Connecticut.

<https://portal.ct.gov/vaccine-portal/covid-19-vaccination-phases>

2. Wear a face mask.

Unvaccinated adults and children age 2 and over should continue to wear a face mask when indoors in public places. To maximize protection from the Delta variant, fully vaccinated persons should continue to wear a face mask when indoors in public if in areas of substantial or high transmission rates. In general, a face mask is not needed when outdoors. However, in areas with [high numbers of COVID-19 cases](#), consider wearing a face mask in crowded outdoor settings and for activities with [close contact](#) with others who are not fully vaccinated.

Face masks are required when utilizing public transportation or at a transportation hub such as an airport, bus, or train station.

[Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs | CDC
CDC- How to Protect yourself and Others
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/groups/families-covid-19.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/groups/families-covid-19.html)

3. Social Distance – Stay 6-feet away from others.

When inside your home, avoid close contact with people who are sick. When outside of your home, keep 6-feet of distance between yourself and other people who do not live with you. If you are in isolation due to a recent COVID-19 diagnosis or quarantining due to exposure to someone who is COVID-19 positive outside of your home such as a work-related exposure, consider wearing a face mask and whenever possible put 6-feet distance between yourself and other people who live with you, until your period of quarantine or isolation has ended.

4. Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces.

Being in crowds puts you at a higher risk for COVID-19. Enjoy the fresh air from outdoors when possible and weather permits. When indoors, open windows and doors if possible, to bring in fresh air.

5. Wash your hands often.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20-seconds especially after being in a public place, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Remember to wash your thumbs, as they may be forgotten when washing your hands.

It is always important to wash your hands:

- a. Before eating or preparing food
- b. Before touching your face
- c. After using the restroom
- d. After leaving a public place
- e. After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- f. After handling your mask
- g. After changing a diaper or assisting someone else with toileting
- h. After caring for someone who is sick
- i. After touching animals or pets, animal food or animal waste
- j. After touching garbage

When soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/handwashing-poster.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/handwashing-poster-es.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/wash-your-hands-fact-sheet-508.pdf>

https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/wash-your-hands-fact-sheet_esp-508.pdf

https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/family_handwashing-508.pdf

https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/family_handwashing_esp-508.pdf

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I require that my support staff get vaccinated?

Yes, as the employer of record (EOR) you can require an employee to be vaccinated and to provide documentation of the vaccination, however this is not a DDS requirement. As an EOR this is your decision. You can explain to the direct support professional (DSP) that getting vaccinated helps to decrease the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to you, your family members and to the DSP should someone in your household become infected with COVID-19.

2. What can I do to assist my direct support professional (DSP) to get vaccinated?

If you decide to require your staff to be vaccinated, you can explain your reasons for requiring that the DSP be vaccinated such as decreasing the risk for COVID-19 transmission in your home, or if the individual or other family members are not able to be vaccinated. Also, you can direct them to visit the website link below for vaccine eligibility and vaccination locations throughout Connecticut.

<https://portal.ct.gov/vaccine-portal/covid-19-vaccination-phases>

3. What if my DSP chooses not to get vaccinated?

If the DSP refuses to get vaccinated, you may choose to require proof of weekly negative COVID-19 testing and continued use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks while on duty caring for the individual (indoors and outdoors).

4. When will fully vaccinated people be able to receive a booster vaccine?

The current CDC recommendation is that people with moderately to severely compromised immune systems receive an additional (third) dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine at least *28 days after* the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech (Comirnaty) or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Pfizer-BioNTech booster shots are also available for people who completed their initial series at least 6-months and are:

a. 65 years and older

b. 18 years and older who reside in long-term care settings. Long-term care settings include skilled nursing facilities [SNF], intermediate care facilities for persons with intellectual disabilities [ICF-IID], residential homes/group homes, housing for people with disabilities, transitional housing, shared living, adult foster care (this may include community companion homes), assisted living facilities, inpatient substance use treatment facilities, and inpatient psychiatric settings/psychiatric residential treatment facilities [PRTF].

<https://acl.gov/covid19/covid-19-vaccine-access-long-term-care-settings>

c. 18 years and older who have underlying medical conditions. Underlying medical conditions include cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease (i.e., asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD], cystic fibrosis, pulmonary hypertension), dementia, diabetes mellitus type 1 and 2, Down syndrome, heart disease, human immunodeficiency virus [HIV], liver disease, obesity, sickle cell disease, thalassemia, pregnancy, solid organ or blood stem cell transplant, and current or former smokers.

d. 18 years and older who live in high-risk settings. High-risk settings include those identified as long-term care settings, congregate day programs, and correctional institutions.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html#HighRisk>

e. 18 years and older who work in high-risk settings. This includes people who work in high-risk settings as previously outlined as well as those who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure due to occupational or institutional settings. This includes first responders, education staff, food and agriculture workers, manufacturing workers, corrections workers, U.S. Postal Service workers, public transit workers, and grocery store workers.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html#HighRisk>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/immuno.html>

At this time, the Pfizer-BioNTech booster authorization only applies to people whose primary series was Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. In the future, it may be determined that people who received the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine may need a booster shot; the CDC will issue recommendations to the public when there is a plan for Moderna and J&J/Janssen booster shots.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html>

Information pertaining to COVID-19 vaccination recommendations is constantly evolving. Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) for updated guidance.

5. Can an employer of record (EOR) require that DSPs receive the COVID-19 vaccine booster?

This question cannot be answered because employee COVID-19 vaccination requirements are at the discretion of the EOR. The CDC and ACIP (advisory committee on immunization practices) recommendations for booster vaccines have been previously outlined in this document. At this time, the priority remains to encourage all eligible persons to become fully vaccinated.

6. What do I do if I have been exposed to someone who tests positive for COVID-19?

The CDC recommends that if you are fully vaccinated and came into [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 get tested 3-5 days after the date of your exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days after exposure or until a negative test result. Get tested if you experience COVID-19 symptoms. Isolate if you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the prior 10 days or are experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#).

If you are unvaccinated and came into close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 you should:

- a) Stay home for 14 days after your last contact with a person who has COVID-19.
- b) Self-monitor for fever (100.4°F), cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
- c) If possible, stay away from people you live with, consider wearing a face mask at home when you cannot avoid being around other people, especially people who are at [higher risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19.
- d) If you have symptoms, immediately self-isolate and contact your healthcare provider or local public health authority.

[CDC Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People
COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation](#)

7. What is “close contact”?

Close Contact through [Proximity and Duration of Exposure](#): Someone who was within **6 feet of an infected person** (laboratory-confirmed or a [clinically compatible illness](#)) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, *three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes*). An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting from 2 days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date), until they meet the criteria for [discontinuing home isolation](#).

Exception: In the **K–12** (kindergarten through 12th grade) **indoor classroom** setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a [clinically compatible illness](#)) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) [correctly and consistently](#) wore well-fitting [masks](#) the entire time.

This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

[Appendices | CDC](#)

8. Should the direct support professional (DSP) wear a face mask? If so, when?

If the DSP is not fully vaccinated, they should wear a face mask at all times while on duty. If the DSP is fully vaccinated, it is still recommended to wear a face mask while on duty to maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others. However, the employer of records (EOR) may choose to make allowances such as requiring the fully vaccinated DSP to wear a mask while in the home, vehicle, indoor public places, and outdoor crowded areas. The EOR may also choose to allow the fully vaccinated DSP to remove their face mask at outdoor, well-ventilated, non-crowded areas such as a park. If the EOR requires the fully vaccinated DSP to wear a mask at all times while on duty, the DSP shall comply.

[CDC Face Mask Guidance](#)

9. What is the correct way to wear a face mask?

The correct way to wear a face mask is so that it fits snugly over the nose, mouth and chin and there are no gaps around the sides. If wearing a cloth mask, choose one that has 2 or more breathable layers, covers the nose and mouth, fits snugly against the sides of the face, has a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask, and has no gaps. It is important to wear a mask that fits well and covers your mouth and nose properly. Wearing a mask properly protects the wearer by reducing the number of germs inhaled, and it protects others by reducing the number of germs that are airborne and can be inhaled by others. When a face mask does not cover the nose, the wearer is breathing in more particles from the air around them, which increases the risk of getting infected with the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) virus.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/COVID-19-Prevent-Getting-Sick-Mask-Guide-Dos-Donts.pdf>

10. Why does a face mask need to cover the nose and mouth?

The COVID-19 virus is found in people's nasal passages (nose). When an infected person exhales, they release viral particles from their nose into the air. The person releases particles from their nose without coughing or sneezing. Wearing a mask over the mouth *and* nose helps to keep these infectious particles from becoming airborne and reaching others and spreading the virus.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Additional CDC Resources

[CDC launches COVID-19 resources for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC](#)

[Stay safe from COVID-19: A guide for caregivers \(cdc.gov\)](#)

[Stay safe from COVID-19: How I get my COVID-19 shot \(cdc.gov\)](#)

[Stay safe from COVID-19: Get a COVID-19 shot \(cdc.gov\)](#)

[Stay safe from COVID-19: Get a COVID-19 shot - YouTube](#)