

From: Tom McAlvanah
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021
Subject: OPWDD COVID-19 Update

Data:

As of January 13, 2021, there have been 7,604 confirmed COVID-19 positive cases statewide. Of those that tested positive, 5,737 individuals resided in certified residential programs. A total of 552 individuals statewide who tested positive have passed. A total of 10,162 staff were reported as confirmed COVID-19 positive.

As of January 20, 2021, there have been 8,166 confirmed COVID-19 positive cases statewide. Of those that tested positive, 6,100 individuals resided in certified residential programs. A total of 564 individuals statewide who tested positive have passed. A total of 10,971 staff were reported as confirmed COVID-19 positive.

The trends remain fairly consistent. There was a slight adjustment in the amount of individuals with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis by location. During these last weeks, 81% of the individuals lived in the Downstate region (five boroughs, Long Island and lower Hudson Valley); previously the data indicated that percentage as closer to 90% in the downstate region. The other trend elements remained consistent.

Vaccine Update:

Roger apologized for the technical glitches for reporting of the COVID vaccine through the improper links. Delays in the reporting by agencies are understandable.

There is some increase in the acceptance rate for the vaccine. The number of declinations are decreasing to some extent, but vaccine hesitancy is still very much present. The number of individuals accepting the vaccine are increasing.

The discussion also referenced the shortage of vaccines around the nation and the interruption in the supply chains. It was noted that for those who have received the first dosage, there will be a second dosage allotted for and forthcoming. There is of course great deal of differences on a county-by-county basis.

Advocacy for individuals in the community, especially those with co-morbidities and other staff including care managers will be ongoing.

Appendix K Waiver submittals:

No update for this week

Executive budget proposal for OPWDD:

Here are a few updates and clarifications, but the waters are still muddied with many variables at play, too numerous to mention.

In short:

1. The minimum wage increases for designated counties throughout the State will be funded for OPWDD providers who have staff earning less than the starting minimum wage.
2. To recognize efficiencies mandated in the budget proposal, OPW will look to align Residential supports to individuals based on need and be offered Residential opportunities in the most integrated settings possible, with less reliance on the 24/7 supervised settings. This is not fully understood yet, and discussions with OPW as to how that affects current vacancies in Residences will be forthcoming.
3. OPW will work with the voluntary providers on matching individuals in their State Operated residences to transfer to the voluntary operated homes, while returning individuals who are 'aging-out' of out of state Residential schools will be evaluated for placement in the ensuing State Operated vacancies. More to come there as well.
4. The RRR funds within the Residential Room and Board supplements will be eliminated, and the reinstatement of the PPA for capital projects will allow providers to access funds for property renovations. OPW will still realize savings on the short term even as they hire Regional office staff to process the providers' requests.

5. Depending on the relief package NYS can receive from the Federal government, (at this point it looks like that decision will be in early March), OPWDD may be forced to enact a 1% cut to its Medicaid programs, estimated to be \$14 M annually in state share funds. This would directly impact rates of program operations in Residential and Day Services, again, contingent of the size of the Federal response to the states. Will keep our eyes on that one.
6. The 20% withhold to 5% was announced. What becomes of the 5%, if it is a permanent cut or not, is to be determined.
7. The COLA was once again deferred.

This is a proposed budget with so many moving parts here. OPW has an outline of how they will manage the current residential vacancies and not a definitive method. It is unclear how that will affect new people coming into the system and those individuals and families who are currently on the CRO list. There is also no clarity if and how operating rates will be cut and how that will affect a new rate methodology. Further discussions to better understand OPW's vision in response to the Governor's savings mandate will be occurring over the next several weeks.