

Guidance Regarding Visitors to Residential and Nonresidential Facilities Certified or Operated by the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

(funded, operated, certified or designated providers)

Department of Health 24/7 Hotline: 1-888-364-3065

Dear Staff/Providers:

The following guidance is applicable to all residential and nonresidential facilities certified or operated by the NYS State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and is based on the most current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NYS Department of Health (DOH) recommendations for prevention of the spread the novel coronavirus of 2019 disease (COVID-19) and the management of Persons Under Investigation (PUI). Please review this information, including the links below, with your program's leadership and staff and make any necessary adjustments to your program policies and protocols. OPWDD encourages you to also monitor your Local Health Department guidance.

A. Guidance for screening visitors/members of the public:

All residential and nonresidential facilities certified or operated by OPWDD (e.g. Individualized Residential Alternatives, Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, Site-Based Day Habilitations programs, etc.) receiving regular in-person contact with members of the public should immediately develop policies to schedule and pre-screen over the telephone all planned visits by non-staff entities, including families, care managers, advocates, etc., using the following three questions:

- Have you traveled to a country for which the CDC has issued a [Level 2 or 3 travel designation within the last 14 days?](#);
- To your knowledge, have you had contact with any [Persons Under Investigation \(PUIs\) for COVID-19](#) within the last 14 days, OR with anyone with known COVID-19?; and
- Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath)?

Upon screening, if a potential visitor answers "No" to questions (1) and (2) but "Yes" to question (3), please ask them to restrict visitation until they are no longer exhibiting any such symptoms. In the event it is agreed upon that a visit will occur, taking into consideration any heightened risk factors (e.g. the medical status of the person being

visited or others in the home), please ask the visitor to wear a mask and to exercise their visit in a contained area, such as a single bedroom, to the extent possible.

For those potential visitors who answer “Yes” to questions (1) or (2), but “No” to question (3) (i.e., reports no symptoms of a respiratory infection), please decline their request for visitation and instruct them to contact the NYS DOH for further direction.

For those potential visitors who answer “Yes” to questions (1) and/or (2), and also “Yes” to question (3), (i.e., reports having symptoms) please also instruct them to immediately contact their medical provider and Local Health Department, and to call 911 if they are experiencing serious symptoms (e.g., shortness of breath). Please also instruct the screened individual to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.

If facilities receive unscheduled or unannounced visitors, screen them appropriately using the three questions above, before allowing entrance into the facility.

B. Additional Factors for Consideration

In addition to the above screening guidance, the following factors should be considered when implementing temporary visitation restrictions, in accordance with the health and safety of individuals, associated with COVID-19:

- the general health or medical status of individuals served by a program, which may increase the risk to those individuals;
- the potential or actual infection status of individuals served by a program; and/or
- the prevalence of confirmed cases of COVID-19 within a geographic area which increases potential for risk.

All visitation limitations should be time limited and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Finally, the [visitor poster issued by DOH](#), should be immediately posted at all facility entrances.

Your attention to this important message is very much appreciated to ensure the safety of you, your staff and the people you support.

Regards,
Theodore Kastner, M.S., M.D.
Commissioner
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