



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

March 20, 2020

Dear Participant and Families,

This message is to inform you about steps that the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is taking during this COVID-19 Coronavirus crisis. Each day, we are asked to make difficult decisions balancing the best interests of the people we support – families, staff, and fellow community members. Last week a [TOOLKIT](#) regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) was shared with providers and posted on our website to assist them as they continue to prepare and respond to meet the needs of the people we support. The DDA will continue to post additional information on an ongoing basis, so please be sure to check our website.

In adhering to Governor Hogan's recent order to reduce the size of social, cultural, and community gatherings to 10 people in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Maryland, Meaningful Day Services including Day Habilitation, Community Development Services, and Employment Services providers have temporarily closed facility-based Day Habilitation and community support services.

If you receive Meaningful Day Services in the general community, or a small place with fewer than 10 people, your services might continue, as directed by your provider. However, we ask that you practice social distancing during this critical time. Social distancing means that we make every attempt to maintain a space of six feet between ourselves and everyone else.

If you receive other DDA services where fewer than 10 people are served (like job coaching, small group or one-to-one community employment), you likely can continue this service. If you aren't sure what service you are in, talk to your Coordinator of Community Services (CCS), Support Broker (as applicable), or provider.

We know this is difficult news for you and your family. The DDA wants to do everything possible to keep you and your loved ones safe during this time. If you are unsure if your provider may be impacted by these decisions, please talk to your service provider, Coordinator of Community Services or Support Broker about your service options. The DDA Regional Offices also have a list of what services providers have chosen to close.

Please also realize that your provider can close their programs if they are worried about the spread of disease, or may send you home if you show any signs of being sick—even if there isn't

yet a case of COVID-19 in your program. Everyone is doing their best to try to keep people safe and healthy.

The DDA maintains a high standard for the hiring and training of Direct-Support Professionals. Given the challenges of the current situation, and the high demand for Direct Support Professionals, the DDA will be flexible with the hiring requirements providers during this time. All staff must receive training on any participant's Person-Centered Plan (PCP) for whom they are providing support. Training on the PCP must consist of basic health and safety support needs for that person.

Together we will continue to provide the best care and support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the families we serve. We are gathering questions from participants, families, providers, advocacy groups, and associations that will be posted on the DDA website along with our responses. We have established a dedicated email for which you can share questions at dda.toolkitinfor@maryland.gov. Additional information is available from the Maryland Department of Health website at <https://health.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx>.

Within the next few weeks, I will be conducting updates to ensure you are informed and have the most up-to-date information. Please join the DDA webinar on Friday, March 20, from 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm, and every Friday thereafter. Here is the link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/5220201238731987980>.

The DDA is committed to your well-being and to the health of all those we serve. You can always reach out to your regional director, or you can email us at dda.toolkitinfo@maryland.gov with questions. Additional information is available from the Maryland Department of Health at <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>.

A plain language overview of Covid-19 virus is on-line at: <https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plain-Language-Information-on-Coronavirus.pdf>. A fact sheet on What do Older Adults and People with Disabilities Need to Know? is at: <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>.

Remember to keep yourself safe, stay home if you feel ill, and wash your hands frequently to stop the spread of germs. Thank you for your understanding during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bernard Simons".

Bernard Simons
Deputy Secretary
Developmental Disabilities Administration