



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health & Human Services  
Department of Developmental Services  
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Commissioner

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To: DDS Individuals and Families  
From: Commissioner Jane Ryder  
Date: 3/13/2020  
Subject: Coronavirus Update for Individuals and Families

Dear DDS Community:

I'd like to provide an update on the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) response to COVID-19. As you know, Governor Baker has declared a State of Emergency and DDS is taking all necessary precautions and actions to protect your loved ones – their health and safety is our top priority.

The Central, Regional, and Area Offices of DDS will remain open; however, we are actively making operational changes to respond to this public health emergency.

### **Health**

**If you or anyone in your family has symptoms of illness (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) or potential exposure to COVID-19, please take these steps:**

- Contact the primary care physician and follow their guidance
- Contact the Massachusetts DPH epidemiology line: [\(617\) 983-6800](tel:6179836800)
- Contact your DDS Area Office

For the latest information from DPH on COVID-19, please visit: [mass.gov/covid19](https://mass.gov/covid19)

### **Communication**

Your Area Office will remain the primary DDS point-of-contact for you regarding ongoing services and supports. Provider agencies have been directed to contact you immediately should they decide to close or alter service schedules. Area Offices will remain in contact with you to help mitigate any disruptions and ensure needed supports are addressed.

## **Meetings and Events**

While DDS offices remain open, we are encouraging individuals and families not to visit offices until further notice. All in-person meetings, site visits, and work-related travel for state employees has been discontinued until further notice. We are advising our employees that all regular internal business, such as ISP meetings and provider contract meetings, may continue to be conducted remotely using conference calls, WebEx and other group communication tools.

## **Guidance for Group Homes, Facilities, and Day Programs**

The Executive Office for Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has provided guidance to the field. Please find current EOHHS guidance for the type of programming you or your loved one receives:

- [For congregate care programs \(including group homes\)](#)
- [For community day programs](#)
- [For in-home caregivers](#)
- [For assisted living residences](#)

Find all guidance here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-recommendations>

This DPH site and these guidance documents will continue to be updated, so please review regularly.

## **Nursing Homes and DDS State-Operated Facilities**

Please be aware that DPH has ordered restrictions for visitation of all nursing homes and this order has been extended to DDS facilities at Hogan and Wrentham and State Operated group homes. Here are links to view those policies and procedures:

- [Order of the Commissioner of Public Health](#)
- [Policies and Procedures for Restricting Resident Visitors in Nursing Homes and Rest Homes and Personal Protective Equipment Recommendation Updates during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)

The situation remains fluid so we will continue to update the DDS website and our social media channels as information becomes available. Please call your Area Office with any immediate questions or for assistance.

Thank you,

Jane F. Ryder  
Commissioner  
[Department of Developmental Services](#)