

BCArc Family Visitation Guidelines – June 2020

BCArc recognizes and supports the importance of close family connections in the lives of the people we serve, and our goal as COVID-19 restrictions are loosening is to help families resume spending time together. The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage and facilitate this reconnection per DDS guidance, while maintaining some reasonable safeguards to minimize the risk of inadvertently spreading the virus to a loved one or their housemates and staff during a visit.

Visit Guidelines

- All visits will be scheduled in advance for a 30 minute time block at the residence with up to 2 members of the person's family. In this initial phase families can schedule 2 visits per week, one on a weekday and one on the weekend. Only one visit will be scheduled at a residence at any given time. Given current public health guidance we are still not able to facilitate family visits in the community at this time.
- BCArc Site Managers or Supervisors will be in touch with families before the visit to share a copy of the visitation guidelines and discuss the safety measures in place and what to expect during the visit. Site Managers and house staff will also do pre-teaching regarding safety measures and what to expect with the individuals we serve to prepare for visits, including social stories or role play as needed.
- Family members will be screened upon arrival in the same way house staff are for temperature and any signs of illness. Family members with any symptoms will be asked to reschedule their visit to a later date. Visitors are not permitted to visit if they have tested positive or been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, or if they have been ordered by a health care professional or public health official to quarantine due to exposure.
- All visits will occur outside, and family members will not be able to access the house for any reason including bathroom usage or visits to the person's room. If the designated outdoor area includes chairs, tables, or a picnic bench, all surfaces should be disinfected using an EPA-approved disinfectant for use against SARS-CoV-2 after each visit.
- The House will maintain a log of all visitors, including names, dates and sign in & out times
- Family members will be asked to wear masks during the visit, as will the individual if they can tolerate it. Masks will be provided if the family doesn't bring their own.
- In this first phase of reopening DDS requires that the public health guidelines of mandatory social distancing of six feet between people be maintained during the visit. We recognize this will be very difficult for many family members, and flexibility and teamwork will be required. Site Managers and families should discuss individual cases before visits occur and make a plan about how to keep social distancing during the visit.
- Families can bring a pre-prepared meal to share together outside if they wish, remembering that removing masks to eat together makes recommended social distancing all the more important.
- If families are bringing other items for the individual to the visit they need to be given to staff first and not the person so that any necessary sanitizing can be done.
- A staff member from the house will be assigned to facilitate each visit – this person does not need to be part of the visit or sitting with the group, but will be close enough to answer questions and encourage people to remember safety guidelines while enjoying the visit together.
- If family groups are having difficulty following safety protocols staff will offer some supportive prompting to try and reestablish safety parameters. If this is not successful staff may ask that the visit be rescheduled, and the team will meet to discuss changes for future visitation. BCArc has no desire to be unnecessarily intrusive into these important family visits, but the safety protocols discussed above have been remarkably effective in keeping the people we serve virus free. This is our obligation to the people we serve, and we know families want this too.

These guidelines are subject to change based on continually evolving guidance from the State regarding necessary public health measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. BCArc will continue to do our best to communicate effectively with families during this time and provide all the support we can to facilitate these crucial contacts between the individuals we serve and their families.