



March 24, 2020

Management of Coronavirus/COVID-19 in OPWDD Family Care Homes

The Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is providing this document to assist OPWDD Family Care Providers in the prevention and management of the Coronavirus (also referred to as COVID-19). These guidelines are based on information made available by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and are accurate as of the date written.

COVID-19 Transmission

Coronaviruses are viruses that cause illnesses which can range the common cold to more severe respiratory illnesses. This most recent form of the Coronavirus is called COVID-19. COVID-19 is different from prior strains of Coronavirus and more is being learned about it each day.

Early reports suggest spread from person-to-person most likely happens during close exposure to a person infected with COVID-19. Person-to-person spread may occur similarly to other coronaviruses, mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Currently, the extent to which a person touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes, contributes to transmission is unclear.

Infectious (Contagious) Period

It is currently thought that people can become sick from COVID-19 between 2 – 14 days after exposure (CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/faq.html>).

Currently, there is no information to support whether a person is contagious prior to showing symptoms. Documentation from the CDC states that people are thought to be most contagious when they are the most symptomatic (sickest). Some spread may be possible before people show symptoms. There have been reports of this occurring with COVID-19, but this is not thought to be the main way this virus spreads.

Signs and Symptoms

COVID-19 may cause mild to severe respiratory symptoms such as:

- Cough
- Fever
- Shortness of breath or difficult breathing; and
- Pneumonia

PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS:

As is the case with many viruses and illnesses, there is a tremendous reliance on ensuring proper precautions are being taken.

OPWDD will be following the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) recommendations and guidance for the management of processes associated with COVID-19 and for the implementation of activity restrictions for individuals exposed to, under investigation for, or who have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

However, there are OPWDD-specific actions and General Preparedness actions that Family Care Providers can take to help prepare for a potential outbreak in your community. They are as follows:

ACTIONS TO TAKE TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

The New York State Department of Health (DOH) recommends the following ways to minimize the spread of all respiratory viruses, including COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. If you use a tissue, throw it in the trash.

OPWDD-Specific Preparedness Actions

1. Sponsoring Agencies should have their Family Care Registered Nurse provide a refresher training to all Family Care Providers on essential Infection Control techniques and prevention.
2. To address logistical challenges associated with this, the Registered Nurse may send the training materials to the Family Care Provider via email/mail so that the training can be reviewed by the Provider.
3. This training should include, but is not limited to, information on basic universal infection control standards, proper use of Personal Protective Equipment, environmental cleaning, review of activity restrictions, use of isolation, and education on how to access up-to-date information on the NYSDOH website regarding COVID-19.
4. It is important that all Family Care Providers are aware that regardless of the level of isolation or quarantine required, the supervision levels of the individuals we support must continue to be maintained in accordance with their Life Plan.
5. Sponsoring Agencies should be contacted regarding support for the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for use if/when needed for their Family Care program. The use of PPE, such as gloves, gowns, and surgical face masks may be necessary and should be requested immediately from the Sponsoring Agency if/when an individual and/or a household member is showing symptoms of COVID-19, has been exposed to COVID-19, or has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
6. For those individuals who have family involvement, consider whether they may be able to go on a home visit so that isolation can occur with their family members.

General Preparedness Actions

1. Ensure first aid kits are fully stocked including a thermometer and that there is at least a 2-3 weeks supply of basic over-the-counter medications such as Aspirin, Tylenol and Ibuprofen, cough comfort medication, hydrocortisone, Benadryl, antibiotic creams, band-aids, dressing supplies, alcohol wipes, etc.
2. Ensure there is a 2-3 weeks supply for those individuals who utilize supplies such as lancets, strips utilized for glucometers, tube feeding supplies, ensure, chux, and/or ostomy supplies as applicable.
3. Stock up on non-perishable items for the home and ensure there is enough food available to meet the needs of the household, should quarantine and/or isolation be required.

IN THE EVENT OF ILLNESS:

Consistent with usual practice, in the event of illness, contact your primary healthcare provider. Your primary healthcare provider will advise you as to the process of evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of your symptoms. In particular, if your primary healthcare provider believes that your symptoms may reflect infection with COVID-19, he/she will advise you as to how to pursue additional examination and testing.

Testing for COVID-19 is typically coordinated with the Local Department of Health. Based upon the results of testing and other considerations, the Local Department of Health will evaluate whether you, a household member, and/or an individual can be cared for at home. If hospitalization is not needed and isolation and/or quarantine at home is recommended, monitoring will be performed by staff from your Local Department of Health. You should follow the prevention steps below until a healthcare provider or staff from your Local Department of Health says you can return to your normal activities.

Call ahead before visiting your doctor

If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider in advance if you are experiencing any respiratory symptoms or if you believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

Wear a facemask

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, you should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

Hand hygiene

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60 to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. If hands are visibly

dirty, it is better to use soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can and immediately wash your hands with soap and water or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer as described above.

Avoid sharing personal household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

Clean all “high-touch” surfaces everyday

High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use an EPA registered household cleaning spray or wipe if available (EPA registered cleaning agents will have a “Safer Choice” label), according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Discontinuing home isolation

The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

REPORTING AND NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR OPWDD PROVIDERS

1. Individual Confirmed for a Quarantine and/or Isolation Order from COVID-19

OPWDD has asked the NYS Justice Center for its assistance with case tracking individuals who are placed in quarantine or isolation status for the purpose of supporting containment. All FCPs are required to immediately notify their Sponsoring Agency of any quarantine and/or isolation orders served by their Local Department of Health or medical professional regarding an individual served by their program. Once those notifications have been made, OPWDD requires that FCPs also report the case to the Justice Center for the purposes of tracking only. Reports are not considered reports of abuse/neglect, significant incidents or notable occurrences and are being utilized to support public health efforts. The reporting process is outlined below:

- a. Report Covid-19 quarantine or isolation status to the NYS [Justice Center](#) for the Protection of People with Special Needs @ **1-855-373-2122**

The Justice Center is assisting OPWDD in receipt of reports. Web forms are not acceptable for Covid-19 reports.

- FCPs should have the name of the individual(s), date of birth, TABS ID number, and quarantine/isolation status available to give to the Justice Center for all individuals receiving services at the home;
 - Justice Center will collect information regarding isolation/quarantine status as well as potential exposure risks for all individuals receiving services at the family care program.
- b. Within 24 hours, the Sponsoring Agency must enter a report into the OPWDD Incident Report and Management Application (IRMA). Note to Sponsoring Agencies: Upon notification by the family care provider, a Justice Center XML will be created.

2. Requests for Assistance

Family Care Providers should contact their sponsoring agency for assistance if there are any challenges associated with the following:

- Shelter Requirements for quarantine and/or isolation
- Training issues
- Procuring Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Cleaning & Disinfection Products or other supplies and/or materials.

If you are an Agency Sponsored Family Care program and are unable to procure required PPE and/or cleaning & disinfection products, contact your local County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to request assistance.

Online Resources Provided by CDC:

- CDC's Interim Guidance for Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 in Homes and Residential Communities:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>
- Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html>
- When & How to Wash Your Hands:
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Guidance may be updated as the situation changes and new information becomes available on COVID-19. Please visit the DOH website regularly at <https://health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/> for the most current information.