



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

March 20, 2020

Dear DDA Providers,

Thank you for your support and cooperation during this COVID-19 Pandemic. Your leadership and commitment to support our community members during this crisis is deeply appreciated. Each day, we are asked to make difficult decisions balancing the best interests of our staff, community members, and those we support. Last week a [TOOLKIT](#) regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) was shared with you and posted on our website to help you continue to prepare and respond to meet the needs of the people we support.

In this unprecedented State of Emergency our highest priority is to the health, safety and well-being of people with disabilities, families, provider staff, and all Marylanders. The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) understands the tremendous strain and increased demands and staffing constraints on providers. It is essential that information is shared, policy and process exceptions made, and new partnerships formed.

We are gathering questions from 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 stakeholders can share questions at [dda.toolkitinfo@maryland.gov](mailto:dda.toolkitinfo@maryland.gov). We will stay in communication with you as we learn more from our State and federal partners. I will conduct weekly webinars to share information in addition to communications during the week. Regional directors are available to assist with both Coronavirus related and other incidents. Additional information is available from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) website at <https://health.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx>.

The DDA is working with our national association, consultants, Medicaid, and MDH budget staff on federal Medicaid emergency authority options related to new service options, rates, and exceptions to current service requirements, limits, and staff qualification requirements. We want to be diligent in considering all options so that a comprehensive proposal can be submitted to the federal government. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has advised that approval of requests will be retroactive. The DDA will provide updates as they become available.

The DDA is closely monitoring the 4<sup>th</sup> quarterly payment to ensure that the payment is made on time. At this point, it is on schedule and providers should receive the payment on or by April 3, 2020.

As for payment during the closure of day programs and other meaningful day programs and the need for additional coverage in residential programs, the DDA is exploring funding options through CMS. Examples include “retainer payments” for both day and residential providers; use of family members, legal guardians, and spouses for staff; and exceeding service limits.

Providers are implementing extraordinary strategies to support participants and other providers. For example, providers that have both day and residential programs are deploying day staff to support people in their residential sites. In addition, day and residential providers are partnering so that day program staff (that are not able to work due to closures) are utilized to support residential providers with day activities and staff residential shortages. We encourage and recommend providers consider all options and liabilities as they explore business models using staff from other agencies.

We know the high demands for Direct Support Professionals and will be flexible in your onboarding efforts. We have requested recommendations from a few advocacy organizations for staff qualification exceptions while also protecting participants and ensuring health and safety. It is important that staff receive training on participants’ Person-Centered Plans (PCPs) including Behavioral Plans and Nursing Care Plans for whom they are providing support. Training on the PCP must consist of basic health and safety support needs for that person.

As day programs close to support social distancing and prevent the spread of the virus, consideration of staff resources to provide services in other service models during the response to COVID-19 crisis is recommended including:

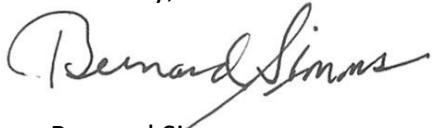
- Providers that only offer Meaningful Day Services (e.g. Day Habilitation, Community Development Services, Employment Services) contact other provider agencies in your local area and develop cooperative arrangements to supply staff to support participants in other service areas like residential, respite, personal supports, or other in-home support
- For non-facility based providers, please prepare to redeploy staff to support essential supports for health and safety within your own agency or through cooperative agreements with other provider agencies
- Technology such as FaceTime and remote support services can be used to promote health and safety of meaningful day services and personal support service to recipients, when at home and not receiving another service

Together we will continue to provide the best care and support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, families, and direct support professionals. That is why within the next few weeks I will be conducting daily and/or weekly updates to ensure the Provider Community is informed and provide the most up-to-date information. Please join me on the

DDA webinar this coming Friday, March, 20 from 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm and every Friday thereafter: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/5220201238731987980>.

The DDA is committed to your well-being and to the health of all those we serve. Thank you for the work you do, your leadership and commitment in supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard Simons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bernard Simons  
Deputy Secretary  
Developmental Disabilities Administration