



State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Ned Lamont  
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff  
Commissioner

Peter Mason  
Deputy Commissioner

**The ARC Town Hall Meeting**

**A Conversation with DDS Commissioner Jordan A. Scheff June 12, 2020**

***DDS Follow-up Responses to Family Questions***

A message from DDS Commissioner Jordan A. Scheff:

*I was humbled and appreciative of the participation and feedback from the town hall discussion last week. Thank you to each and every one of you who took the time to listen to the presentation. I know the discussion may not have answered all of your questions, but I hope it allowed each family to understand that the health and safety of everyone we serve is the highest priority and the driving factor of every decision we have made throughout this awful pandemic.*

*I also want to thank you; individuals, families and advocates who continue to press on during this unprecedented and extraordinarily difficult time. I cannot imagine how painful it has been to not able to hug your loved ones or having supports and services decreased or stopped all together. Thank you for your patience, thank you for your perseverance and thank you for trusting the department to do what is best for the individuals we support. It has been a long and difficult road, and we have more road to travel down, but most importantly, we will continue to do it together.*

**1) Can families access the DDS guidance and plan for Reopening Employment and Day Services?**

DDS issued the Reopening Plans for Employment and Day services on June 10, 2020. The plans detail a phased approach that requires employment and day providers to submit a program specific reopening plan for approval by DDS. The process also calls for a person-centered approach to individuals returning to their program that includes a meeting with case managers to discuss the most appropriate and safest way to begin transitioning back to employment and day services.

Phase 1 of reopening is set to begin on July 15, 2020.

To review the Reopening Plans for Employment and Day Services please visit:

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/COVID-19/DDS\\_Employment\\_and\\_Day\\_Services\\_reopening\\_memo\\_FINAL\\_6\\_10\\_20.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/COVID-19/DDS_Employment_and_Day_Services_reopening_memo_FINAL_6_10_20.pdf)

**2) How will transportation be provided to employment and day services? If transportation is not available will an individual lose that portion of their budget or can it be used for other purposes?**

Employment and Day providers have been asked to specify a process for transportation in their plans for reopening. The guidance issued by DDS outlines important measures that must be reviewed while examining transportation services. These measures include how many individuals will be transported at one time and a cleaning schedule after each use. DDS is also engaging in conversations with the Department of Transportation on public transportation protocols and statewide guidance.

Once we enter Phase 3 we will need to reassess how transportation services are being delivered and the expectations from the Department of Transportation. Funding assigned to the individual for the purpose of transportation will need to be used for the person to be transported.

**3) If a decision is made not to attend day program because of pandemic related safety concerns will an individual lose their day program funding?**

The team should be meeting to determine how the person's needs for day support will be met. The Case Manager will work with the team to determine how the currently assigned funds will be accessed to meet the existing needs. If the person is no longer in need of day services the funding allocation will end.

**4) Will testing be mandatory for an individual to return to day program?**

Testing will also be addressed as part of each provider's reopening plan. Although DDS is not mandating each provider to test every individual that returns to the program, a provider may have the latitude to make this decision if it is what is best for their program and the individuals they support.

**5) Will a doctor's note be required for medically compromised individuals interested in returning to day program?**

This will be within the purview of the provider to make the decision on if a doctor's note is necessary to return to the day program.

**6) Are there additional funds being given to agencies to provide the extra staffing requirements and funds for additional PPE?**

The supplement payment that has been provided as part of the enhanced reimbursement to providers during the pandemic is meant to cover costs such as additional staffing and PPE expenses.

**7) What process will be in place for an individual who is unable to tolerate wearing a mask?**

As part of each provider's reopening plan they need to include a training plan for staff on PPE and a curriculum for the individual's they support.

From a more general perspective, Governor Lamont's [Executive Order 7BB](#) does require cloth coverings or a higher level of protection in public whenever close contact is unavoidable. The Order, however, details, "Nothing in this order shall require the use of a mask or cloth face covering by anyone for whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition, a child in a child care setting, anyone under the age of 2 years, or an older child if the parent, guardian or person responsible for the child is unable to place the mask safely on the child's face. If a person declines to wear a mask or face covering because of a medical condition as described above, such person shall not be required to produce medical documentation verifying the stated condition".

In addition, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have issued the following guidance. Although this guidance is not specific to individuals with intellectual disability it does detail a process for people that have tested positive for COVID-19 and are not able to wear a mask.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

**8) Can families access the DDS guidance and plan for reopening visitation in DDS residential settings?**

DDS issued the plan for reopening visitation in DDS residential settings on June 12, 2020. Utilizing a person-centered approach, the plan provides guidance, recommendations and suggestions for providers to evaluate individualized risk tolerance for visitation. The plan offers numerous tools to help measure risk tolerance and allow each provider to make an informed choice on the best way to move forward with visitation, in collaboration with the individual they support, their family and the team. The tools can also be used to help decide on when individuals who left a setting can return.

Implementation and rollout for visitation may begin on June 20, 2020, depending upon the decision of the provider.

To review the Reopening Plans Visitation please visits:

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/COVID-19/DDS\\_Visitation\\_Reopening\\_Plans\\_memo\\_FINAL\\_6\\_12\\_20.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/COVID-19/DDS_Visitation_Reopening_Plans_memo_FINAL_6_12_20.pdf)