



October 29, 2020

Colleagues, stakeholder and interested parties,

Testing - I wanted to give folks a quick update about testing regimens and results. To date WSC has gone through a baseline testing period in which all staff were testing between 9/1-9/30. We then went through our first surveillance testing period 10/1-10/14 where all staff who work in or have regular contact with residential programs were tested.

As folks know from my last update the latest guidance that received states that testing requirements will now be based on county positivity rates and results of previous staff testing. Specifically: Low-Positivity County Testing Regimen - If the testing results indicate a county positivity rate in which the Program site is located is below five percent (<5%), the Program site should conduct testing every two weeks on 50% of its staff.

On 10/28 we completed our second surveillance testing period from 10/15-10/28, where half of our staff were tested. The next testing period is 10/29-11/11/11 and we will be testing the remaining half of our staff. I am happy to report that we have had no positive results. I am also very impressed with our compliance – THANK YOU to all the staff for helping with this.

Currently the requirements for testing only apply to residential staff. In our continual efforts to prevent the spread of COVID – 19 WSC has extended this requirement to all Day Program staff as well. Additionally, all administrative staff wishing to be tested can also do so.

All our testing is being conducted through self-administered saliva test kits. The kits are available to employees at the main office, 291 Mystic Ave. Monday thru Friday from 9a-4p. Staff here at the office will handle getting the test kits to the lab for processing.

Test results are sent to WSC and we will happily make them available to any employee upon request. We understand that many employees work for other agencies with similar requirements and taking multiple tests may not be necessary. We typically receive the results three days after submission.

I have had several staff ask me about our plans for the winter and how those might be affected by the rise in COVID cases in MA. WSC will follow the guidelines set by the state, EOHHS and DDS. We are monitoring the case numbers and keeping in close contact with state agencies for planning purposes. We continue to stock PPE and other essential items to ensure that our programs are well supplied. Our residential sites are implemented the recommended precautionary steps of

mask wearing and social distancing when possible as well as limited community access. At this time, we are not being advised to implement further restrictions or to close our Day Program, but this could change at any time and we are preparing for that.

Visitation – Our office continues to be open on a limited basis. Residential programs are accessing the premises to pick up supplies, submit financials and conduct other essential activities.

Administrative staff are working in the building either full in person or on a hybrid schedule, depending on their work and office space. The building continues to be closed for meetings, tours, group trainings and other non-essential activities.

Residential visitation – We continue to support families to visit our residents. In the summer and fall seasons those visits were primarily happening outside. As you can see from the snow on the ground that cannot continue to happen. As of 10/1/20 DDS began to allow in person visitation with strict guidelines – see attached. We are in the process of evaluating all homes to see if we are able to meet the visitation guidelines in the space. Once these assessments are completed, they will be shared with the appropriate people. Currently, we are working with each resident on a case by case basis to arrange visits.

Day visitation – Visitation at the Day Program is discouraged. All non-essential activities such as reading tutors, therapist and Service Coordinator visits are on hold. Any essential visitation must be approved by the Director and scheduled in advance.

We know being away from friends and family is difficult for everyone and we are trying to manage this in the safest way possible and we appreciate everyone's help!

Day Program – Currently, are approximately 50% of our members attending. There are a lot of changes and it is a work in progress, but people seem to be happy to be back. WSC limited attendance is intentional. Participants were invited to return based on their wishes and the results of risk assessment conducted by the agency. Most of the participants that have not returned are those that are medically or clinically complex. We also have some cases where the individual or families have declined the offer to return until a later date. For participants that are not able or ready to return but want to stay involved with services we are offering remote learning options.

Residential – Currently all of our homes are COVID free. However, we are seeing raising number in local COVID cases. Please remember that this is not over – take precautions - wear your masks – social distance – wash your hands.

PPE/Cleaning & Household supplies – WSC continues to purchase and make available PPE. We have KN 95 and surgical masks, gloves, goggles, face shields, gowns, hand sanitizer, disinfectant sprays and wipes, oximeters, and temporal thermometers. Additionally, for the homes we have a

stock of paper towels, toilet paper, batteries, water, air mattresses, flashlights and other supplies that have been difficult to purchase in the stores.

Reminder PPE only works if you use it. **PLEASE remember to wear your mask correctly and all the time that you are at work.** The best tools we must fight this pandemic are masks and handwashing. As you have all seen on the news the COVID numbers are increasing rather than decreasing and many people are bracing for another COVID surge. We are all tired of this virus but do not let your guard down – protect yourself, your teammates, and the people that we support.

Holidays- The holiday season is upon us. Please think carefully about travel and spending times in larger groups and avoid these activities if possible. All the potential COVID exposures that have been reported to WSC in the last month have been a result of contact with a family member, house visitor or close friend. We are grateful that those exposures did not result in a positive finding for our staff or individuals but that does not mean it will not next time.

All travel or home visits for the individuals are being discussed and planned with the Residential managers. This year many people will not be engaging in their regular holiday activities.

Staff are reminded of the MA travel restrictions (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order#lower-risk-states->). If you plan to travel outside of MA, please consult with HR so that we can help you navigate the travel restrictions.

Thank you and stay safe!

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