



November 16, 2020

Colleagues, stakeholder and interested parties,

The holiday season is here and COVID cases are surging to rates of infection that exceed what we saw in the spring. While we understand that this time of year is typically spent with family and loved ones WSC is asking you to be cautious.

Visitation:

Attached is a memo from EOHHS regarding holiday visitation. As you can see the guidance prohibits visitation in sites where someone is COVID positive. At this time, WSC has no COVID positive homes and we would like to keep it that way. The best way to ensure this is to limit resident's exposure to non-essential people. As you know we are all being asked to limit our circles and reduce contact with others whenever possible. When considering visitation and holiday gatherings WSC strongly urges a serious review of the risks. If possible, it is advised that families visit with our residents virtually and hold off on in person visitations.

When this is not possible or the risk of not seeing visitors presents a greater risk than not, we will be implementing the protocols listed in the attached DDS visitation guidelines.

- Residents participating in offsite, time limited, visits will be asked to attest to the nature of visit, the people attending and the safety protocols in place
- Residents participating in overnight visits will be asked to stay with their family member for a 14-day quarantine or present with a negative COVID test 72 hours prior to returning to the home.
- Residents wishing to have onsite visitation will need to make the request to management who will review each request on a case by case basis. Again, WSC would like to limit or prevent access of non-essential visitors to our homes.
- Anyone traveling for the holiday is asked to visit MA.gov and follow the travel guidelines.

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.

I know these measures seem extreme, but the industry is seeing a large spike in new cases. Agencies across the state are reporting having to quarantine multiple homes and close day

programs due to positive COVID tests for both staff and participants. Those of you that were here in the spring know that we have 25% of our residents test positive for COVID, causing illness and in some cases death. We do not want to return to those circumstances!

Many of us have gotten calls, emails or texts from the state about the rise in cases. These communications have been urging everyone to take this surge of cases seriously and WSC urges you to do the same. Please be cautious, always wear your PPE and remember everyone has the potential to be COVID positive.

Testing: Testing continues, and we are currently in a surveillance testing period 11/12-11/25/20 and we will be testing half of our staff. A-K should plan on coming in prior to Thanksgiving.

Currently the requirements for testing only apply to residential staff and all employees with direct access to residents. WSC is trying to be proactive and promotes regular testing so we have opened testing to all employees who wish to be tested.

Employees can stop by the office during business hours of M- F 9a -4p for COVID testing. If multiple people show up for testing at the same time you may be asked to wait outside and/or to test in your vehicle. If you work at a site where there has been a possible exposure you will be asked not to enter the building.

Office operations: Our office continues to be open on a limited basis. Employees should be accessing the building for essential activities only and are asked to make an appointment in advance.

Many administrative staff are working on a hybrid or remote schedule, depending on their work and office space. The building continues to be closed for meetings, tours, group trainings and other non-essential activities.

Day program operations: Currently, approximately 50% of our members are attending. 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, they cannot engage in safety protocols or 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 operations: Currently all our homes are COVID free. However, we are seeing rising numbers of COVID cases everywhere. 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.

PLEASE use PPE the correct way – wear your mask correctly at all times, wash your hands, wear gloves and assume everyone can expose you to COVID. The best tools we must fight this pandemic are masks, handwashing and social distancing. We all got good news about a vaccine being available in the near future so there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Please continue being safe so that we can all get there together.

Thank you!

Carolyn Guffey, M.B.A., PHR
Executive Director
291 Mystic Ave.
Medford MA. 02155
617-629-3562
guffeyc@wscinc.org