



November 6, 2020

Colleagues, stakeholder and interested parties,

Governor Baker has instituted new targeted measures to disrupt the increasing trend of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Starting today at 12:01 am there will be a stay at home order from 10p-5a, everyone over the age of 5 years must wear a facemask at all times in public (indoor or out), gathering orders or 10 in doors and 25 outdoors and many businesses will close at 9:30p to comply with curfew orders. Employees should always remember to get and carry a copy of your essential worker letter with you.

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. We are seeing many agencies with positive cases in their residential and day programs. 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 10/29-11/11/11 and we will be testing the remaining half of our staff. I am happy to report that as of today we have had no positive results. We hope that this continues but we are prepared if it does not.

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 employees with direct access to residents/participants. Additionally, any employee that does not have contact with residents/participants and wishes to get tested can contact their manager to arrange testing. WSC is trying to be proactive and promotes regular testing.

Test results are sent to WSC and we will happily make them available to any employee upon request.

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. We ask that you call and make an appointment to enter the building. Many administrative staff are working on a hybrid or remote schedule, depending on their work and office space, and we want to ensure someone is here to assist you. 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. As of 10/1/20 DDS began to allow indoor visitation with strict guidelines. 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.

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 will adjust our operations accordingly.

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.

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.

As you have all seen on the news the COVID numbers are increasing and we are in the middle of another COVID surge. **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 and handwashing. We are all tired of this virus but do not let your guard down – protect yourself, your teammates, and the people that we support.

Thank you and stay safe!

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