



TO: DDD PROVIDER NETWORK
FROM: Division of Developmental Disabilities
RE: Response to COVID-19 (rel27)
DATE: 04/30/2021

COVID-19 Guidance for Alabama HCBS Waiver Service Providers
Division of Developmental Disabilities Services

Temporary Waiver of TB Skin Testing for new employees

The Alabama Medicaid Agency has provided flexibility for “new employee” TB Skin Testing through the federally designated Public health Period. As a reminder, please refer to the attached guidance (and screening assessment) provided by AMA for further guidance. **Please note:** This change only applies to new and initial employees. The requirements for annual testing remain the same.

Appendix K Amendment - The amendment to provide a rate increase for specific services for the purposes of Staff recruitment and retention was submitted to AMA who will then forward to CMS. As previously stated, AMDH will request a provider recruitment and retention plan once CMS approval is obtained.

Appendix K updates awaiting CMS approval are as follows:

- End temporary overtime rates for **traditional and self-directed** Personal Care, Companion Care, Respite, and Skilled Nursing, effective 5/14/2021.
- Temporarily increase service rates by 30% for selected **traditional and self-directed** services for the following: Day Habilitation, Community Experience, Adult Companion, Personal Care, In-home and Out of home Respite, LPN Nursing/hour, RN Nursing/hour, Employment Services (discover, individual job coach, individual job developer, prevocational community, employment small group, personal care on worksite, prevocational facility). These rate increases are to be effective for the time-period of 3/1/2021 through 8/31/2021.
- Replacing the current 19% increase with a 30% increase for Residential Habilitation, effective 3/1/2021 through 8/31/2021
- Remaining Appendix K allowances will expire no later than six months after expiration of the PHE.

IRBIs –ADMH-DDD is evaluating the status of service delivery based on Alabama’s current COVID-19 environment. Additional information is forthcoming.

Infectious Disease Emergency Plans

Please note providers are required to notify the Regional Office Director of any changes to required Staffing levels.

Temporary approval of changes may be provided upon the CSD’s review of the following:

- Health and Safety Risk assessments completed on each individual in the home (i.e., level of maladaptive behaviors, risk mitigation strategies in the event of an emergency, etc.)
- The agency’s plan to ensure specialized staffing needs are met
- The agency’s plan to mitigate risk should a reduction in staff be approved
- The agency’s plan and timeline to reestablish appropriate levels of staffing
- Updated or addendums to the Agency’s Infectious Disease Emergency Plan (Risk mitigation plan)

Please refer to the “Response to COVID-19 (rel7)” Guidance dated 3/28/20 (attached) for additional information. ADMH-DDD is aware of provider challenges with staff recruitment and retention and is committed to work with the provider towards a solution that ensures continuity of services to those served by the agency.

CDC Guidance for Visitation in Congregate Living Situations

In March, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued revised guidance related to indoor visitation in nursing homes. Providers are advised to refer to this guidance for all congregate living situations. The guidance states:

- Facilities should allow responsible indoor visitation at all times and for all residents, regardless of vaccination status of the resident, or visitor, UNLESS certain scenarios arise that would limit visitation for:
 - Unvaccinated residents if; 1) the COVID-19 county positivity rate is greater than 10 percent; and 2) less than 70 percent of residents in the facility are fully vaccinated.
 - Residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated until they have met the criteria to discontinue transmission-based precautions; or
 - Residents in quarantine, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met criteria for release from quarantine.

Indoor Visitation During an Outbreak

- While outbreaks increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission, a facility should not restrict visitation for all residents as long as there is evidence that the transmission of COVID-19 is contained to a single area (e.g., unit) of the facility. Facilities should continue to adhere to CMS regulations and guidance for [COVID-19 testing](#), including routine staff testing, testing of individuals with symptoms, and outbreak testing.
- When a new case of COVID-19 among residents or staff is identified, a facility should immediately begin outbreak testing and suspend all visitation until at least one round of facility-wide testing is completed. Visitation can resume based on the following criteria:
 - If the first round of outbreak testing reveals no additional COVID-19 cases in other areas (e.g., units) of the facility, then visitation can resume for residents in areas/units with no COVID-19 cases. However, the facility should suspend visitation on the affected unit until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing.
 - If the first round of outbreak testing reveals one or more additional COVID-19 cases in other areas/units of the facility (e.g., new cases in two or more units), then facilities should suspend visitation for all residents (vaccinated and unvaccinated), until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing.

Compassionate Care Visits

- Visits for compassionate care, such as an end-of-life situation or a resident in decline or distress should be allowed at all times for any resident (vaccinated or unvaccinated), regardless of the above scenarios. In addition, facilities and visitors should continue all infection prevention and control practices.

While there are inherent risks associated with exposure to COVID-19 in all congregate living, providers should follow the CMS guidelines. <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/cms-updates-nursing-home-guidance-revised-visitation-recommendations>

ADMH-DDD providers should continue to follow CDC and/or ADPH COVID-19 risk mitigation strategies throughout the Public Health Emergency period.

NON-COVID RELATED

The updated Person-Centered Assessment and Planning form can now be found under your Clients Plan of Care > Plan Review tab. These forms should be viewable to all but should only be Added or Edited by the Support Coordination Agencies. If you have any questions or concerns, please email ddsupport.dmh@mh.alabama.gov

Please send any questions you may have relating to COVID-19, services, etc., to: ADMH-DDD.Questions@mh.alabama.gov