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**To:** *DDS Individuals and Families*  
**From:** *Commissioner Jane F. Ryder*  
**Date:** *June 24, 2020*  
**Subject:** *DDS Day Program Reopening Efforts*

As Massachusetts begins the cautious, multi-phased process of reopening, DDS is working with the COVID-19 Command Center and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to determine how to reopen DDS day programming. The Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) remains dedicated to health and safety as our system continues to respond to the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

DDS and the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP) have created a Coordinating Council to develop a phased Reopening Plan, which will apply to Community-Based Day Supports (CBDS) and employment services. The Coordinating Council's reopening plan will focus on six key areas including:

- Establishing **Infectious Disease Control** standards and protocols to keep individuals, staff, and families safe;
- Exploring alternative **Service Delivery Models** that will remain dynamic and flexible with our ongoing response to COVID-19;
- Creating **Billing and Contracting** mechanisms to allow for flexibility in how providers deliver services and create options for individuals and families;
- Reestablishing **Transportation Services** in the safest way possible, while supporting the system to accommodate phased reopening schedules that will evolve with ongoing COVID-19 responses;
- Building **Technological Capacities** of programs using additional devices and tools to address communication challenges, provide training and technical support, enable remote services and increase family access to technology; and
- Creating an effective **Communication Strategy** to keep providers, individuals, and families updated on policies, timelines, and protocols while also providing a forum for questions, ideas, and concerns.

In addition to this work, provider agencies have begun to survey individuals and families on their needs to safely return to programming as well as assess their own ability to implement social distancing. Such

surveys have also covered personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning, staff training, and other health and safety regulations necessary to reopen. As such, re-opening efforts and timelines may look different in each program, given their ability to meet those needs and comply with the operational standards and guidelines being established.

It is incredibly important that individuals and families remain connected with their local providers and DDS Area Office for updated information and instructions particular to their program. **General information and updates on these efforts will be made on the DDS website ([www.mass.gov/DDS](http://www.mass.gov/DDS)) and on our social media platforms including [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).**

The uncertainty of this time has been difficult for everyone, and challenges are expected to continue as we work together through this cautious and multi-phased process of reopening day services. Although the timeline is difficult to project, we anticipate this planning process to be finalized this month with possible reopening of some locations in early July. The safety, health, and wellbeing of our individuals, families, and staff remains central to all of our planning efforts – and we anticipate these responses to evolve as we continue to monitor COVID-19 infection rates and progress made in mitigating the spread of this infectious disease.

As always, I appreciate your ongoing patience and input as we continue to address the many impacts this public health crisis has had on our DDS community. I encourage you to remain connected with your Service Coordinators and Area Offices, who are available to support you and your loved ones through this extraordinary time.

Sincerely,

Jane F. Ryder  
Commissioner