

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Coronavirus Impact on Community Services for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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How have people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) living in community settings been impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic?

Like other populations such as seniors, Veterans and prison inmates living in congregate settings, people with I/DD living in both community and state-operated settings have been impacted by the Coronavirus. To date, we have the following reported positive cases:

- 63 confirmed cases in Community Integrated Living Arrangement (24/7 group home) settings
- 24 confirmed cases in Intermediate Care Facilities for Developmentally Disabled (24/7 facility) settings
- 159 confirmed cases in State Operated Developmental Center (state-run institutions) settings

We have reported 10 deaths in CILA/ICFDD settings and 2 deaths in SODC settings.

What has the state done to assist community organizations serving people with I/DD?

DHS has taken several proactive measures to support community organizations serving people with I/DD including:

- Suspending Community Day Service (CDS) programming on 3/17/20 to limit exposure and contact. DHS committed to financially supporting CDS programs so that they will remain whole and be able to reopen upon determination by the state.
- On 3/30/20, DHS announced an approximate 20% increase in CILA reimbursement to account for additional in-home staffing during the stay-at-home period; a similar increase was announced by HFS for ICFDD settings.
- On 4/10/20, DHS announced an additional 10% increase to CILA rates to account for added expenses associated with increased staffing. HFS has not yet announced a similar increase for ICFDD community settings but we understand efforts are underway to comparably increase rates.

Do I/DD community organizations have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

I/DD community organizations, like many other essential services are struggling to acquire an adequate inventory of PPE items such as masks, gloves, face shields, gowns and hand sanitizer. Given the inability of many people with I/DD to independently practice precautionary measures such as frequent hand-washing, properly covering face when sneezing and social distancing, the need for PPE among staff who work directly with people with I/DD is intensified.

- DHS conducted a PPE Needs Survey among all DHS community partners but this has not yet resulted in widespread distribution of PPE items.
- Statewide Associations have been working in partnership to secure and disseminate PPE items, although this effort has not adequately addressed statewide need.

Is there adequate access to testing for people living and working in I/DD community settings?

No.

- Widespread testing is reported to be challenging in most parts of the state, resulting in the frontline workforce within I/DD organizations having to put their own safety and health at risk.
- Many organizations report that residents displaying possible COVID-19 symptoms are not referred or approved for testing, putting every person living and working in a setting, as well as every person they come into contact with outside of the setting, at risk.

What is the financial impact on I/DD community organizations?

Many I/DD organizations report having significantly higher payroll expenses due to needing to pay higher wages, bonuses and adapting staffing plans in order to retain an adequate workforce.

- Organizations are calculating the increased staffing expense associated with the pandemic to evaluate the overall fiscal impact. In cases where organizations have converted from a shift-staff to live-in model to reduce exposure, weekly staffing expenses are reported to be up to 2x greater.
- This along with the expense associated with PPE purchase, increased food costs and comfort measures for staff and clients quarantined in CILA settings is having a significant impact on community organizations' already strained budgets.

What additional actions would most benefit community organizations serving people with I/DD?

The positive steps initiated by the state to help financially offset the increased expenses associated with the Coronavirus pandemic have been welcome and helpful.

- As is widely understood, community I/DD organizations have struggled to recruit and retain an adequate direct support workforce for much of the past decade.
- Continuing the current rate structure beyond the pandemic period to enable organizations to pay competitive wages and adequately cover operating expenses is an essential step forward in stabilizing the community I/DD system.

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