
Guidance: Independent Providers of Waiver-Funded Services

March 19, 2020 | DODD

Attention Independent Providers of Waiver-Funded Services:

As the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) responds to the coronavirus (COVID-19), please continue to exercise flexibility to ensure the health and safety of Ohioans with developmental disabilities and their families. DODD thanks all independent providers for the unique and important role they play throughout the developmental disabilities system.

As of the close of business March 13, DODD's Office of System Support and Standards (OSSAS) suspended regularly scheduled compliance reviews and regulatory work [Plan of Correction (POC) and Plan of Correction - Verification (POC-V)] in response to COVID-19.

The following information gives recommendations and guidance on important issues for waiver-funded independent providers and is effective immediately.

Health and Safety

DODD encourages independent providers and the people for whom they provide services to be familiar with and follow the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) related to social distancing and personal hygiene.

DODD has also given information to direct support professionals (DSP) and the people for whom they provide support in this resource, Preventing and Preparing for COVID-19. Following these guidelines for social distancing, independent providers may limit the delivery of services in community settings.

Positive COVID-19 Diagnosis

Independent providers may not discharge a person from services only due to the diagnosis of COVID-19. It is expected that independent providers will follow appropriate procedures as recommended by the CDC, ODH, and other health care professionals.

Independent providers are encouraged to maintain a person-centered approach to services. Communication

is critical during a state of emergency. Ensure that there is consistent communication among independent providers, the person receiving services, the person's service and support administrator (SSA), as well as with families or guardians.

DODD supports independent providers' abilities to prioritize medical appointments, follow-ups, and consultations based on the needs of the person and any advice from appropriate medical professionals. Independent providers are encouraged to utilize telehealth options when available.

To maintain the health and safety of people receiving supports, independent providers should be aware of who is the designated back-up provider for each person they support. If there is any question, providers should reach out to the person's SSA for details.

Exceeding 60 Hours for Services

During this state of emergency, independent providers are enabled to exceed the 60-hour ceiling for providing services, if necessary, to maintain the health and safety of people receiving supports. Independent providers will still require authorization from the SSA. However, independent providers do not need to wait for the individual service plan (ISP) to be updated or signatures to be gathered. Verbal or electronic authorization will suffice.

Training and Service Changes

Due to the state of emergency, online CPR/first aid classes will be accepted. Appropriate CPR/first aid certification must be obtained if the independent provider continues to provide services after June 1, 2020.

Even with the lenient training requirements described above, medication administration training requirements have not changed. All independent providers who are responsible for administering medication must have medication administration training. Providers whose certifications are expired for no more than 180 days may continue to administer medications and get renewal of certifications during that extension.

Alternative Service Delivery Methods

DODD encourages independent providers to explore alternative service delivery methods, such as the use of Remote Support or allowing people to receive services in the homes of independent providers. People receiving services, guardians, and teams must be consulted and approve these alternatives.

With the uncertainty that many people with developmental disabilities and their families are facing, some independent providers may not be providing services to every person who they usually do provide services. If you are an independent provider and looking for more work, reach out to your local county board of

developmental disabilities or local agency providers. Many people will be requiring more supports during this state of emergency, and agency providers will be looking for additional DSPs. Working for an agency may be a good way to supplement any income that may be lost during this state of emergency.

Another option for independent providers is filing for unemployment. The unemployment guidelines have changed due to the state of emergency.

DODD Support Teams

In this critical time, everyone will be required to work collaboratively, operate differently, and be proactive to limit the spread of COVID-19. During this state of emergency, DODD fully realizes there are on-the-ground issues that require flexibility from normal operations and additional assistance from the department.

DODD support teams are available and consist of staff ready to help county boards and providers.

DODD has set up a dedicated web page for department communications and links to helpful resources that will advise people with disabilities, their families, service providers, direct support professionals, county boards of developmental disabilities, and the community at large.

For specific questions about COVID-19 and additional information and resources, DODD urges you to use the Ohio Department of Health's call center. Call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634), or visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

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