



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

March 20, 2020

Dear Participant and Families Who Are Self-Directing Services,

This message is to inform you about steps that the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is taking during this COVID-19 Coronavirus crisis. We know this is a difficult time for you and your family. The DDA wants to do everything possible to keep you and your loved ones safe during this time. Each day, we are asked to make difficult decisions balancing the best interests of the people we support – families, staff, and fellow community members.

In adhering to Governor Hogan's recent order to reduce the size of social, cultural, and community gatherings to 10 people in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Maryland, you may decide to stay home to protect yourself from the virus. In addition, your staff and DDA funded services may not be available at this time. Meaningful Day Services including Day Habilitation, Community Development Services, and Employment Services providers have temporarily closed facility-based Day Habilitation and community support services.

If you receive Meaningful Day Services in the general community, or a small place with fewer than 10 people, your services might continue, as directed by your provider. However, we ask that you practice social distancing during this critical time. Social distancing means that we make every attempt to maintain a space of six feet between ourselves and everyone else. If you need help with identifying new services or finding new staff, please talk to your Coordinator of Community Services or Support Broker.

We are gathering questions from participants, families, providers, advocacy groups, and associations that will be posted on the DDA website along with our responses. Attached are initial questions and DDA responses related to self-direction. We have established a dedicated email for which you can share questions at DDA.toolkitinfo@maryland.gov.

Within the next few weeks, I will be providing updates to ensure you are informed and have the most up-to-date information. Please join our DDA webinar on Friday, March 20, from 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm, and every Friday thereafter. Here is the link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/5220201238731987980>.

The DDA is committed to your well-being and to the health of all those we serve. You can always reach out to your regional director, or you can email us at

DDA.toolkitinfo@maryland.gov with questions. Additional information is available from the Maryland Department of Health at <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>.

A plain language overview of Covid-19 virus is on-line at: <https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plain-Language-Information-on-Coronavirus.pdf>. A fact sheet on What do Older Adults and People with Disabilities Need to Know? is at: <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>.

Remember to keep yourself safe and stay home if you feel ill, and wash your hands frequently to stop the spread of germs.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard Simons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Bernard Simons
Deputy Secretary
Developmental Disabilities Administration

Attachment – Self-Direction Frequently Asked Questions

Attachment - Self Direction Questions

Questions and Answers:

1. Similar to the directive for Providers, teams can make changes as needed and keep receipts/records for later reimbursement by DDA later? Even with no explicit line item already in budget?

DDA Response

The DDA is working with our national association, consultants, Medicaid, and MDH budget staff on federal Medicaid emergency authority options related to new service and expense reimbursement options and exceptions to current service requirements, limits, and staff qualification requirements. We are exploring and advocating for funding and resources to support participants, families and providers. We will keep stakeholders informed as we learn more from our State and federal partners.

The DDA recommends that participants keep itemized receipts, detailed records or logs of any services and purchases arising from COVID-19 preparedness or response to illness, and staffing changes needed to accommodate the COVID-19 response.

2. Can the team add Paid Time Off without modifying the budget?

DDA Response

The DDA is issuing guidelines and a simplified process for participants' self-directing services to submit requests for service and budget changes directly to the Fiscal Management Service (FMS) providers. One option under the federal emergency authorities includes "retainer" payments that we are exploring for participants who are self-directing. We will keep stakeholders informed as we learn more from our State and federal partners.

At this time, the DDA is addressing immediate crisis needs and will not be accepting budget modifications for Paid Time Off. The DDA recommends that participants keep detailed records or logs specific to staffing schedules and interruptions specific to the COVID-19 response such as staff self-exposed and self-isolating, staff tested positive for virus, participant self-isolating, and home self-isolating.

3. What should people with expired or soon to expire plans do? Will FMS be given direction to continue paying all invoices, timesheets, mileage and other reimbursements despite category balances?

DDA Response

The DDA is extending plans and budgets until a new one can be created. We will be issuing guidelines and instructions to the FMS providers. Coordinators of Community Services (CCS) have been advised to complete person-centered planning meetings virtually using the telephone and other technology. Participants should consider progress on outcome and revisions for their plan and budget and be prepared to share with the CCS.

4. Will the FMS have permission to extend current plans based on the prior approved budget?

DDA Response

Yes. The DDA is working on guidelines and instructions related to plans and budgets being extended until a new one can be created.

5. Can staff (including family members that don't live with the Participants) work overtime if deemed the best option? How will the additional cost be handled if the participant budget is not designed to accommodate overtime?

DDA Response

We are exploring under the federal emergency authorities the ability to support family members and overtime. The DDA is issuing guidelines and a simplified process for participants who are self-directing services to submit requests for service and budget changes directly to the FMS providers. Options under the federal emergency authorities that we are exploring include the use of legal guardians and spouses and service limit exceptions. We will keep stakeholders informed as we learn more from our State and federal partners.

The DDA recommends that participants keep detailed records or logs specific to staffing schedules and supports.

6. When hiring staff during this emergency, what will the requirements be for CPR, First Aid, and CMT?

DDA Response

We are exploring under the federal emergency authorities the ability to have exceptions to staff qualifications while also protecting participants and ensuring health and safety. It is important that all staff must receive training on any participant's Person-Centered Plans (PCP) including Behavioral Plans and Nursing Care Plans for whom they are providing support. Training on the PCP must at a minimum consist of basic health and safety support needs for that person.

We are gathering resources related to online CPR training and extensions of expired certifications for Certified Medication Technician (CMT), etc. During this crisis, the person and their authorized representatives can train family, friends, etc. on support needs.

7. Can the team elect to either defer their 45 day nursing delegation home visit or elect to have it by phone rather than expose themselves by having a visitor who may also be visiting many other people?

DDA Response

The 45-day assessment is established by the Maryland Board of Nursing, (COMAR regulations) and we do not have the authority to issue that change. However, it is the responsibility of the nurse to make decisions and take actions consistent with his/her obligation to provide optimal care and protect the health and safety of the people they support as well as their own health and safety. Therefore, during this state of emergency, a nurse may make the decision to avoid an in-person contact based on their assessment of the person's health and their environment and conduct phone, skype, or other virtual means.

8. What is the plan for the worst case scenario... person in SDS... primary and secondary support people unable to provide for them? What should families do when they realize they are approaching a true emergency involving the need for caregivers? Can DDA issue specific guidelines for this scenario?

DDA Response

In this unprecedented State of Emergency our highest priority is to the health, safety and well-being of participants, families, provider staff, and all Marylanders. The DDA understands the tremendous strain and increased demands and staffing constraints on people self-directing services and providers.

Individuals, families and providers are exploring and implementing creative strategies to support participants. Neighbors, religious affiliations, displaced workers, etc. are providing a new workforce to tap into. To support these efforts, the DDA will authorize an increase of Support Brokers hours so they can also provide assistance with securing new staff.

In the event that new supports cannot be identified and primary, secondary, and emergency back-up plans are not feasible, the DDA Regional Offices are available to assist with exploring supports from providers and other options.

9. In the case of hospitalization, can staff be paid to be with the individual if indicated and no unpaid caregiver is available?

DDA Response

The ability to provide support while a person is in the hospital is one of the opportunities under the federal emergency authorities that we are pursuing. We will keep stakeholders informed as we learn more from our State and federal partners.

The DDA recommends that participants keep detailed records or logs specific to staffing supports while a person is hospitalized.

10. What about SD participants who participate in medical day programs or other day programs? They may no longer be attending those programs, but their budgets for personal supports at home are typically small. How can their budgets be quickly adjusted to accommodate an additional 30 hours per week of personal supports?

DDA Response

The DDA is working with the FMS agencies to develop a simple process to approve budget changes including increases to personal supports to meet the needs of the person during the COVID-19 crisis. Personal Supports can include remote and virtual supports for people that only require verbal cuing.

The ability to exceed service limits is one of the opportunities under the federal emergency authorities that we are pursuing. We will keep stakeholders informed as we learn more from our State and federal partners.

The DDA will be issuing guidelines to submit requests for service and budget changes directly to the FMS providers. The DDA recommends that participants keep detailed records or logs specific to staffing schedules and day program closures.

11. Do these simple changes/modifications have to go through a CCS, or can the other team members do it? What happens if CCS is sick and or the capacity of the FMS to process the avalanche of requests is diminished? Would it make sense for teams to submit an emergency plan and take action immediately rather than waiting for the FMS to respond?

DDA Response

The DDA is working with the FMS agencies to develop a simple process to approve budget changes to meet the needs of the person during the COVID-19 crisis related to recruitment, staffing and services. We will be issuing guidelines to submit requests for service and budget changes directly to the FMS providers. The DDA recommends that participants keep itemized receipts, detailed records or logs of any services or purchases arising from COVID-19 preparedness or response to illness, and staffing changes needed to accommodate the COVID-19 response.

12. Can DDA take proactive measures for end of fiscal year? Please immediately issue a statement that existing budgets will be carried over to FY 2021.

DDA Response

The DDA is extending plans and budgets until a new one can be created. We will be issuing guidelines and instructions to the FMS providers. CCS have been advised to complete person-centered planning meetings virtually using the telephone and other technology. Participants should consider progress on outcome and revisions for their plan and budget and be prepared to share with the CCS.

13. Will DDA give FMS maximum flexibility and authority to make quick needed changes and payments?

DDA Response

The DDA is working with the FMS agencies to develop a simple process to approve budget changes to meet the needs of the person during the COVID-19 crisis related to recruitment, staffing and services. We will be issuing guidelines to submit requests for service and budget changes directly to the FMS providers. The DDA recommends that participants keep itemized receipts, detailed records or logs of any services or purchases arising from COVID-19 preparedness or response to illness, and staffing changes needed to accommodate the COVID-19 response.

14. Can the DDA set up a hotline for self-directed families to send questions or make calls?

DDA Response

We have established a dedicated email for which Self-Directed participants can submit questions at dda.toolkitinfo@maryland.gov