

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

### Operational Recommendations for Grantees Providing Direct Services

In response to growing concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and its potential impact on the delivery of services to individuals receiving services that are being reimbursed by funding through a contract with the Department of Human Services, the Department of Human Services Office of Policy Development has developed the following operational recommendations for grantees. **Information will be updated and released on a recurring basis as new information becomes available.**

Information will continue to be shared and disseminated going forward to address questions and concerns that have been brought to our attention. We continue to monitor information from [the Pennsylvania Department of Health](#) and [the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Guidance developed by DHS' office will be centrally located on [this page](#), which will be updated as additional guidance becomes available. We encourage you to continue to consult these resources for updates on COVID-19, information on staying healthy, and updates on the situation in Pennsylvania.

### Recommendations

#### **Recommendation #1: Exercise and promote hygienic practices.**

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to COVID-19. Grantees should remind staff that chances of exposure can be reduced by:

- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after being in a public place, or after blowing noses, coughing, or sneezing.
- Using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water is not readily available. People should cover all surfaces of hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Covering mouths and noses with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or using the inside of their elbow.
- Cleaning AND disinfecting frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If you are sick, stay home.

**Recommendation #2: Review your agency back-up plan and infection control procedures.** The following steps can be taken by grantees and subgrantees providing direct services to individuals.

**Be prepared prior to a home visit or other face to face interactions.** Grantees and subgrantees can help assess the client and family members for COVID-19 by asking if they have a temperature or chills, a cough, breathing problems, or a runny nose. The worker may also know if the client recently had international travel. Grantees and subgrantees should be particularly diligent for clients residing in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring.

**If clients are suspected of having COVID-19:**

- Help the client contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) and their Primary Care Physician (PCP).
- Ensure the client continues to receive necessary services.
- Ask the client to remain at home and avoid contact with other individuals in the household and externally to the minimum necessary contact.
- Educate the client and family members on steps to avoid potentially spreading COVID-19.

**Prepare now:**

- Identify clients who may be at a higher risk of COVID-19 infection – such as those who are immune suppressed and require the highest hours of direct assistance – and work to prepare emergency plans and communicate preventive acting a client can take to stay healthy.
- Conduct an inventory of available Personal Protective Equipment and educate staff on the proper use of gloves, gowns, respirators, and eye protection.

**Recommendation #3: Document any actions that were taken and maintain evidence for why actions were taken.**

Grantees should document any changes to their operations as a result of COVID-19 and maintain evidence to support why the changes were made. Doing so will help demonstrate the basis for an action in the event that the appropriateness of the action is questioned after COVID-19 is contained and operations return to normal.

**Recommendation #4: Stay Informed**

- The Pennsylvania Department of Health holds daily press briefings every day to announce the latest efforts and updates on the commonwealth's response to COVID-19. Providers may watch a free live stream of the daily briefing at noon here: <https://pacast.com/live/doh>. An archive of past briefings is available here: <https://pacast.com/video>.
- COVID-19-specific information can be found at:
  - The Pennsylvania Department of Health's Coronavirus Update Page - <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>
  - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coronavirus Page - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

### **Resources for Infection Control Practices:**

- COVID-19 Information for At-Risk Individuals:  
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Coronavirus%20At%20Risk%20Individuals.pdf>
- CMS Guidance on Face Masks for Healthcare Workers:  
<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-17-all.pdf>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus%20Resources.aspx>