

NOTICE: All provider agencies that receive this publication are required to distribute this update in a timely manner to all therapy practitioners and/or case managers contracted or employed by your agency. You are encouraged to distribute to others that may benefit from this information as well. Thank you so much for all you do!

COVID- 19 Public Health Emergency

On March 13th, 2020, a public health order was issued by Department of Health Secretary, Kathy Kunkel which temporarily strengthens earlier orders to include additional mandatory closures and guidelines to limit the spread of COVID-19 disease.

DDSD is seeking an amendment to this Public Health emergency Order that would include the following language:

All 1915(c) HCBS Supported Living, Family Living, and Intensive Medical Living homes must restrict home access for all visitors, non-medical health care providers, vendors, and other non-essential individuals. This restriction includes Case Managers/Consultants and Clinicians. HCBS Supported Living, Family Living, and Intensive Medical Living homes must facilitate resident communication (by phone or other format) with families, guardians, clinicians, case managers/consultants.

As Clinicians, Therapists are included in this order which is intended to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19. I know this is a huge adjustment for everyone. Please stay home as much as possible. People with disabilities and anyone over age 60 are vulnerable to this virus. Anyone can be ill and contagious and not be symptomatic. Remember symptoms include fever over 100 degrees, cough and difficulty breathing. Call the COVID-19 Hotline 1-855-600-3453 if you are worried about illness or exposure.

Please reach out with any questions. These are very difficult times. The CSB staff and the Therapy Consultants are currently working from home, but we all have access to email and phones. We are here for you.

As always, I appreciate you! Stay safe, Betsy Finley Elizabeth.finley@state.nm.us

Novel Corona Virus and Therapy Services

We have all moved into a very different reality very quickly with the advent of the Novel Corona Virus and COVID-19 illness in New Mexico. Therapists have been working to provide important services to individuals and IDTs in the safest and most effective way possible during this public health emergency. It is clear from the many calls and e-mails we have received that therapists are doing their best to respond to new and changing needs with creativity and patience. We will try to address the most recent information and some of the most FAQs from therapists and agencies related to Covid-19 below. However, please note that this is a very fluid situation.

The Therapist Update is current as of the time of release but therapists and readers should follow the latest guidance available as circumstances can change rapidly.

"Therapist Updates" will be sent via e-mail to DD Waiver Therapy and CM Providers on a periodic basis from the CSB or DDSD. Please distribute to all providers in your agency in a timely manner! Thank you!

- As you are probably aware, daily updates regarding the current state of the virus and various NM announcements are available on the DOH <https://cv.nmhealth.org/> and DDS websites. <https://nmhealth.org/about/ddsd/>
- Your therapy agency has also received a number of important DDS COVID-19 Response Memos and ongoing DDS COVID-19 Guidance releases that should have been forwarded to all therapists and staff in each agency.
- We urge each and every one of you to follow all current recommendations related to handwashing, social distancing and limiting exposure to the virus for yourself and all those you work with!
- Therapists should use telehealth and phone conferencing to complete needed training, monitoring, consultation services, or to attend therapy-related meetings. This is the safest way to protect the therapist and the people in the home from spread of the virus as people can be a carrier and not have noticeable symptoms.
- The Department of Economic Security has issued the following guidance related to small businesses and the COVID-19 health emergency: <https://gonm.biz/about-us/covid-19-response> This may be helpful information for your agency to assist during this time of financial uncertainty.
- Let's do all we can to support each other and practice patience and understanding during these stressful times.
- Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

Many Thanks

A special thank you to the Therapist Network for advocating for therapists and individuals during this time of crisis and for providing some great resources. We know this is stressful for all of us and the individuals/families and teams we work with on so many levels. Many of you are taking care of family members, practicing social distancing and concerned about making ends meet at the same time. Thanks to so many of you who, despite all the challenges, have gone above and beyond to creatively support the individuals and teams you work with during this extraordinary healthcare emergency. All of us must continue to do the best we can to count the blessings we do have.

Telehealth FAQs

- "I understand that DDS is encouraging the use of Telehealth to complete training and needed therapy services whenever possible to limit contact and support social distancing mandates. I have limited experience with Telehealth. Where do I start?"
 - We have been in contact with a number of therapists regarding what telehealth platforms they are using to provide training, consultation, monitoring, and to attend meetings related to therapy services. Most therapists are working to provide HIPAA compliant services. The Telehealth Platforms that are free or low-cost that have been most frequently mentioned by DD Waiver Therapists include:

Doxy.me Access more information at <https://doxy.me/> Some basic information from the website includes:

- **NO DOWNLOAD REQUIRED** - With accessibility in mind, we have made Doxy.me extremely simple and easy to use for both clinicians and patients.
- **FREE TO USE** - We believe cost shouldn't be a barrier to telemedicine. That's why Doxy.me is free for all. Note that certain usage would require a subscription.
- **WORLDWIDE USAGE** - HIPAA, GDPR, PHIPA/PIPEDA, & HITECH compliant: We meet worldwide security requirements.
- **BAA INCLUDED** - All individual providers get a free Business Associate Agreement (BAA) with Doxy.me. Sign up for free to download your BAA.

Zoom for Telehealth Access more information at <https://zoom.us/healthcare>

- Zoom is a popular video conferencing platform that is familiar to many. You can also purchase Zoom for telehealth that is HIPAA compliant. You can get introductory use for free for at least one month. After this you may be able to partner with other therapy agencies or individuals to share the monthly cost.
- Per the Zoom Website: Zoom for telehealth reliably delivers consistent clinical user experiences, seamlessly integrates into your technology and workflows, and keeps you connected and compliant. With high quality video, even in low-bandwidth environments.

Skype for Business (now called Microsoft Team) Access more information at <https://products.office.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/online-meeting-solutions?rtc=1>

- Skype for Business is enterprise instant messaging software developed by Microsoft as part of the Microsoft Office suite. It is offered as part of Office 365. It supports text, audio, and video chat, and integrates with Microsoft Office components such as Exchange and SharePoint.
- You must purchase a package that allows a business associate agreement from Microsoft before a client begins to use Skype for Business (Microsoft Team) for sharing ePHI.

IMPORTANT NOTES Regarding Telehealth Platform Options –

- Mentioning a particular Telehealth Platform above does not constitute an endorsement, certification, or recommendation of specific technology, software, applications, or products by DDS or the CSB. A large variety of Telehealth platforms are available to therapists and therapy agencies. We are simply sharing information regarding what free or lower cost platforms have been mentioned by various therapists as good options for telehealth. Each therapist must investigate the pros and cons of each platform.

- “ I heard that telehealth does not need to be HIPAA compliant during the COVID -19 healthcare crisis. Is that true?”
 - On 3/17/2020 HHS.gov issued a “Notification of Enforcement Discretion for Telehealth”. This notification stated that –“ OCR (The Office for Civil Rights) is exercising its enforcement discretion to not impose penalties for noncompliance with the HIPAA Rules in connection with the good faith provision of telehealth using such non-public facing audio or video communication products during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. This exercise of discretion applies to telehealth provided for any reason, regardless of whether the telehealth service is related to the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions related to COVID-19. “ **However**, DDS will be issuing more specific guidance regarding this in the near future. *This does not allow agencies or therapists to disregard all HIPAA regulations!* The original notification can be found at HHS.gov. It is always preferable to strive to use HIPAA compliant telehealth platforms.
- “What is a BAA that I keep reading about when investigating HIPAA compliant telehealth platform options?”
 - The Business Associate’s Agreement (BAA) - Aside from the security precautions and encryptions that are built into telemedicine systems, an organization that is designed for telemedicine will enter into an agreement with you called a Business Associate’s Agreement (BAA). This is integral to HIPAA compliance. The BAA enumerates how data is stored, where it is stored and what the procedures that the entity, in this case the telemedicine company, follows to ensure that data is protected.

FAQs Related to Therapy Services Provision during the COVID 19 Crisis

- “ So, does this mean I can no longer provide therapy services in the home or at day program sites?”
 - Due to the Covid- 19 pandemic, Therapists are restricted from these sites. Therapists should use telehealth and phone conferencing whenever possible to complete needed training, monitoring, consultation services, or to attend therapy-related meetings. This is the safest way to protect the therapist and the people in the home from spread of the virus as people can be a carrier and not have noticeable symptoms.
- “What if the agency or home does not have the knowledge or does not have access to laptops or tablets that can support Telehealth visits?”

- The state of NM is working on submission of various proposals through “Appendix K” of the NM Waivers. One of the submissions is to waive the \$250 limit to Assistive Technology requests and to allow both General and Budget Based AT requests for laptops, tablets and other items to allow the individual and their IDT to participate in telehealth. You will be notified if the proposal to fund telehealth equipment in individuals’ homes is approved.
- Meanwhile, the COVID – 19 Response Memo #1 issued 3/12/20 states, “providers should support telehealth or remote monitoring via calls, computer-based visits, etc. as much as possible”. If a device is needed, coordinate an IDT meeting with the Case Manager to begin planning for this request.
- “What are some ways that therapists are and can provide needed supports to individuals who are now spending much more time at home and whose schedules have been upended during this healthcare crisis?”
 - Consider how you might need to develop or revise WDSIs that allow the individual to make choices related to home or community activities they are able to participate in now.
 - One therapist worked with staff to modify shopping activities at the store to support the individual to shop on-line and then help staff pick-up the order outside of the store.
 - Some therapists are finding that clients are having more visible frustration and increased behavioral issues given that schedules and routines are often drastically changed. Therapists are considering modification of visual or alternative schedules, modification of sensory support plans, consultation regarding alternative physical activity and home routines as needed, etc.
 - This may be a great opportunity to assist DSP with strategies and/or AT to focus more intensely on a variety of home-living skills including self-care, food preparation, home and yard care as well as leisure access. Strategies and support for phone and computer/tablet skills might also be very helpful at this time!
 - Consider if the individual needs additional Assistive Technology Support. Ordering, fabrication, and training related to AT/PST needs might be very appropriate during this time.
 - Support the staff/family/individual to participate in physical activities like walking, hiking, biking, etc. as well as indoor physical activities. Support the staff in finding ways to help the individual connect with family and friends including phone, Skype, face-time, etc. These activities can help decrease feelings of isolation, frustration and depression that social distancing can promote.
 - Consider placing orders through AT Funds for adapted exercise equipment to be used at home to help individuals who would typically be active in the community or at local gyms to maintain their fitness levels.

- Communicate with other therapists and IDT members regarding the individual's current needs and what strategies and modifications you are working on and that the IDT might collaborate on.

Annual Mobility and Assistive Technology Conference - Save the Date!

- The Specialty Seating Clinic, along with Albuquerque Public Schools, is pleased to announce the dates of the 2020 Mobility & Assistive Technology Conference – October 19 & 20, 2020. We will again hold the conference at the APS Berna Facio Teacher and Staff Development Center in Albuquerque. We are already in the planning stages to provide you with another dynamic conference. More details will be released in late summer.

Miscellaneous Notices

- The Clinical Exception process still applies to JCMs. For ongoing JCM budgets, the CM cannot approve more than 58 therapy hours per ISP budget! If more than 58 hours are needed for the therapist to implement the Therapy Intervention Plan, the therapist must submit an "Application for JCM Clinical Exception Form"- available on the Therapy Services website.
- Please be aware that billing guidelines for therapists must be adhered to! Be aware that any e-mail, phone, telehealth consultation and collaboration under 8 minutes is not billable. Please review the billing section of the DDW Standards Chapter 12 – Section 12.4.7.5 & Chapter 21 – Section 21.9.3. You must continue to document all billable services per therapy and Medicaid standards. Make every effort to sign in and out if conducting on-site visits.
- Referrals to the *Specialty Seating Clinic* for wheelchair, positioning, and adaptive equipment can be made however in-person Seating Clinic appointments will be delayed until further notice unless critical health exceptions are approved. Contact the Specialty Seating Clinic at (505) 232-5726 for further information.
- Any adult with I/DD who is experiencing challenges related to oral eating and/or tube feeding can be referred to the *SAFE Clinic* for expert assessment and recommendations regarding eating/feeding, nutrition, positioning, and associated medical needs to support health, safety and independence. SAFE Clinic appointments will be delayed until further notice unless critical health exceptions are approved. Call Jacoba (Kotie) Viljoen PhD, MSN-Ed, RN, CCRN, CSB ARM Coordinator, SAFE Clinic Coordinator for further information. Office Phone: (505) 841-6188 / Fax# (505) 841-2987 or Email: Jacoba.Viljoen@state.nm.us
- The Targeted Rate Study related to Therapy services was planned to occur this Spring. We have been in active communication with our contractor, PCG, to determine the most feasible way to move forward during this crisis. At this writing there are no firm details, but discussions are underway to determine the best path forward. We will keep you posted.

CSB Training Opportunities

Location	Training	Date
THE FOLLOWING ON-SITE TRAININGS ARE POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE! You will be notified if trainings will be available on-line or when trainings are re-scheduled.		
Albuquerque	PA/Standards	Friday, March 27, 2020
Santa Fe	PA/Standards	Thursday, May 7, 2020
Santa Fe	ARM	Friday, May 8, 2020

DDSD/CSB Websites

- You may access the DDSD/CSB website at the following web address:
 - <https://nmhealth.org/about/ddsd/pgsv/ddw/>
 - Click on the Link for “Services and Supports”. The current DD Waiver Standards can be found as well as a large variety of other DDSD publications and resources.
 - To find a variety of Therapy Services resources and publications, including therapy report templates, please explore the following link trail:
Select “Developmental Disabilities Waiver” → “Services and Supports” → “Professional and Clinical Services” → “Clinical Services” → “Therapy Services”, etc.
 - We are aware that there are still many issues with finding resources on the DDSD Website and with forms that are no longer fillable. The “Search Tool” can be helpful. Please contact your clinical consultant if you need resources that you can’t find on-line or you need a fillable version of a form.

CSB Contact Information

CSB Bureau Chief: Elizabeth Finley, RN Elizabeth.Finley@state.nm.us
 CSB AT/Therapy Coordinator: Felicia Vidro, Felicia.Vidro@state.nm.us
 CSB ARM Coordinator: Jacoba (Kotie) Viljoen, RN Jacoba.Viljoen@state.nm.us
 CSB MFW Manager: Iris Clevenger, RN iris.clevenger@state.nm.us

Contacts for the clinical consultant representing your discipline:

- Julie Mehrl, Occupational Therapy Julie.Mehrl@state.nm.us
505-975-5024 (cell) e-mail preferred. Text or call for urgent needs is OK.
- Mary Beth Schubauer, Physical Therapy MaryBeth.Schubauer@state.nm.us
505-238-2247 (cell) Text or call is OK
- Demarre Sanchez, Speech Therapy Demarre.Sanchez@state.nm.us
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**...THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO...
STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE!!!**