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Developing a Reopening Plan for the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities Service System

The Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability (I/DD) care delivery system has been critically affected by the COVID-19 public health crisis. As restrictions begin to lift and New York State reopens, service providers, Fiscal Intermediaries (FIs), Care Coordination Organizations/Health Homes (CCOs/HHs), and individuals and families must begin planning a safe reopening of the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) service delivery system.

This document, developed by Care Design NY in collaboration with other organizations and advocates, serves as an “Easy Read Guide” for individuals, families, and self-advocates with regards to recommendations and considerations for opening Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability services in New York State.

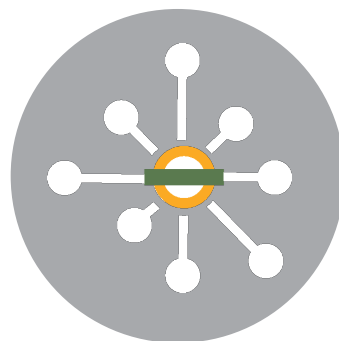
*Please note this document has not been approved or reviewed
by the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities*

COVID-19 is an illness that can spread very easily from person to person. COVID-19 infecting New Yorkers was reported in February 2020 and subsequently social distancing was recommended then mandated.

Because of this, **many Office for People With Developmental Disabilities services were suspended** so that individuals did not catch the COVID-19 illness. Sometime in the future, services will start to reopen. This will start in areas where there is not as much COVID-19.



There are many things service providers and other organizations that support people with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities need to think about before re-opening services.



Care Design NY, a Care Coordination Organization, worked closely with advocates and advocacy organizations **to create a tool for providers, Fiscal Intermediaries and Care Coordination Organizations to use when planning for a safe reopening.**

The following are areas outlined in that tool that will work toward maintaining health and safety:



Individuals and their families need to be at the center of all decisions and planning for the re-opening of Office for People With Developmental Disabilities services. Providers need to talk to individuals and families they support so that everyone feels informed.

Person-centered planning will be more important than ever; decisions about programs, services, health and mental health needs will need to be specific to the individual.



COVID-19 is a contagious illness; it is important that as services reopen, the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities community thinks about how to **keep people at a safe distance from one another** in order to make sure the illness does not spread. This is called social distancing.

Providers will need to plan for ensuring family members and advocates can visit their loved ones safely.



Providers, Fiscal Intermediaries and Care Corrdination Organizations need plans for making sure individuals are safe, especially in day program and community habilitation settings where many people are gathered. Individuals and families should be included in making these plans.



Transportation is another area that providers need to think about since people will need to be safely distanced from one other when being transported to and from programs or other appointments.



Providers, Fiscal Intermediaries and Care Corrdination Organizations will need to make sure their offices and program spaces are safe. “Staff will be trained on how to care for for individuals and themselves safely so COVID-19 germs do not spread.



Providers should provide education and training to individuals and families so they know what to expect when services reopen. Services will still be available, but they will look different. Individuals and families need to know what to expect with these changes.



Providers should communicate with individuals and families the plans of how services will reopen and any ongoing changes that may occur. It is important for providers to be transparent.



Many individuals will need mental health supports when services re-open. Individuals' routines and living environments have been turned upside down during the COVID-19 crisis. There will be new daily routines for individuals after COVID-19. Support will be provided to help them adjust and manage any anxieties/fears.



Service providers, Fiscal Intermediaries, Care Coordination Organizations and advocates are working with Office for People With Developmental Disabilities and other State agencies to make sure **providers have the right amount of funding to support the changes that need to be made** to ensure services are ready to be reopened.



The COVID-19 crisis has been hard for people with I/DD, but but with organizations **working together to support individuals and families receive services safely, we will all succeed.**

If you have any questions, please contact Danielle Wiltsie, Director of Individuals, Families & Advocate Support at memberfeedback@caredesignny.org