

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 14, 2020**

**Department of Human Services Releases COVID-19  
Operational Recommendations for Long-Term Service and  
Support Providers, Additional Guidance for Intellectual  
Disability and Autism Providers**

**Harrisburg, PA** - The Department of Human Services' (DHS) Office of Long-Term Living (OLTL) today released operational recommendations for [long-term service and support](#) (LTSS) providers in Pennsylvania in response to COVID-19. OLTL and DHS' Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) have also submitted applications for emergency modifications to their respective waiver programs to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

“The Wolf administration is committed to serving vulnerable populations every day, and that commitment will not waiver in the face of an emergency,” said DHS Secretary Teresa Miller. “We intend to ensure continuity of services for Pennsylvanians who are older or have disabilities and require regular care.”

OLTL has developed the following operational recommendations, which will be updated and re-released on a recurring basis as new information becomes available. Recommendations include:

- Exercise and promote hygienic practices;
- Review agency back-up plan and infection control procedures;
- Report all suspected cases of COVID-19 to DOH and OLTL and/or the participant's CHC-MCO;
- Contact OLTL before making any changes to your business practice whenever possible. Examples of changes in business practices include, but are not limited to;
  - Suspending services at a service location, such as an Adult Day or Structured Day Habilitation Program;
  - Reducing or eliminating the provision of community-based activities;
  - Restricting individuals' abilities to receive services based on health status; and,
  - Restricting visitors in nursing facilities, Personal Care Homes and Assisted Living Residences.
- Follow State and Federally-Issued Guidance;
- Document any actions that were taken and maintain evidence for why actions were taken; and,
- Stay Informed via the [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

OLTL has also submitted an emergency waiver request to CMS in order to

provide flexibility that may be necessary to continue ensuring the health and safety of Community HealthChoices and OBRA waiver participants.

ODP has similarly submitted an emergency waiver request to CMS to accommodate potential issues with staffing shortages and need for service provisions outside of approved service descriptions to ensure participant health and safety needs can be accommodated during the emergency.

These emergency modifications include but are not limited to:

- Remote/telephone for service coordination;
- Remote/telephone for initial and annual level of care determinations;
- Person-Centered Plan changes;
- Allowable minimum staffing ratios;
- Service location size limitations;
- Settings where services can be received;
- Provider qualifications to allow redeployment of staff;
- Suspension of visitors to facilities; and,
- Rate enhancements.

DHS has already released operational recommendations for providers of [child welfare services](#) as well as [intellectual disability and autism services](#) in Pennsylvania in response to COVID-19. DHS program offices are continuing to formulate recommendations for other provider communities and will publish guidance as it becomes available.

Visit the PA Department of Health's dedicated [Coronavirus webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

Guidance to DHS providers related to COVID-19 is available [here](#).