



July 10, 2020

Home Visits for Individuals Residing in OPWDD Certified Residential Facilities

On March 24, 2020, OPWDD issued “Health Advisory: COVID-19 Suspension of Community Outings and Home Visits”, which suspended community outings and home visits for individuals living in certified residential facilities. This policy aimed to safeguard and maintain the health and wellbeing of residents and staff, while containing and preventing the spread of COVID-19 during the State’s initial growth phase of the public health emergency.

OPWDD’s March 24, 2020 guidance related to home visits is hereby rescinded and replaced with the following guidance. Effective July 15, 2020 for regions of the State that have entered into Phase Four in accordance the New York Forward Reopening Plan, and until further notice, home visits may recommence for individuals living within OPWDD certified residential facilities, consistent with the restrictions herein.

A. Interim Requirements for Participating in Home Visits

Individuals may resume participation in home and family visits with all appropriate risk mitigation strategies in place. These include safe social distancing, use of masks or other face coverings when tolerated, meticulous attention to hand washing and proper cleaning and disinfection.

Families must be reminded that during any off-site visit, exposure to members of different households and to public places, in general, should be done with caution and on a limited basis. Good hygiene must be practiced and safe social distancing should be maintained, whenever possible. Consistent with Executive Order 202.17, masks must be worn in public whenever social distancing cannot be maintained, to the extent they can be medically tolerated.

Individuals may participate in home or family visits only if all of the following circumstances are met:

1. The individual is not suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, and is not under any quarantine or isolation requirements;
2. The individual passes a health screen and temperature check immediately prior to leaving the certified residence;
3. The individual washes their hands immediately prior to their departure from and return to the residence;
4. The location(s) of the visit does not include: (a) any household member suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19; (b) any household member who has been exposed to COVID-19 in the prior 14 days; or (c) any household member displays any symptoms of COVID-19 in the preceding 14 days; AND
5. Staff should remind families to ensure that individuals are washing and/or sanitizing hands throughout the day, implementing social distancing whenever possible, and wearing face coverings whenever social distancing cannot be maintained in public.
 - Prior to home visits, staff should discuss strategies to best implement these practices and ensure that families have face coverings if needed

B. Interim Transportation Requirements for Home Visits

The following measures will be required for agency vehicles used to transport individuals to home visits:

- Only individuals and staff from the same facility should be transported together. Individuals and staff from other certified residences shall not be intermingled for purposes of transportation;
- Capacity on agency buses, vans, and other vehicles should be reduced to no more than 50% of total capacity, to maximize social distancing and reduce COVID-19 transmission risks;
- To the greatest extent possible, individuals and staff should restrict close contact by not sitting near each other or the driver. The use of directional tape and signage can assist in accomplishing this. Additionally, if there are multiple doors in a bus or van, one-way entering and exiting should be utilized. Individuals should be directed to not exit the vehicle at once, instead following driver or staff instruction on exiting one person at a time;
- To the extent individuals can medically tolerate one, individuals, staff, and the driver must wear a face covering at all times in the vehicle. Staff who cannot medically tolerate the use of a face covering should not be assigned to transport individuals;
- After each trip is completed, the interior of the agency vehicle should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before additional individuals are transported;
- Where appropriate and safe, windows should be rolled down to permit air flow; and
- Individuals utilizing public or other transit should be reminded of the importance of social distancing and good hygiene and should be provided with hand sanitizer for use immediately following such transportation.

C. Interim Documentation Requirements for Home Visits

In order to be able to sufficiently trace and track any potential COVID-19 exposure, providers are required to maintain a daily log of all home visits and other visits off site from the certified residence. Daily logs must include the following information:

- The names of any individuals who participated in a home visit, including the address of the home visit, and the dates and times such visit started and ended;
- Confirmation that person(s) picking up or receiving an individual for a home visit denied that anyone in the household was currently under isolation or quarantine for COVID-19;
- Confirmation that person(s) picking up or receiving an individual for a home visit denied that anyone in the housing had any known exposure to COVID-19 in the prior 14 days;
- Confirmation that person(s) picking up or receiving an individual for a home visit denied that anyone in the household has exhibited any of the following symptoms within the last 14 days:
 - Cough;
 - Fever of 100.0 degrees or greater;
 - Sore Throat;
 - Shortness of breath;
 - Headache;
 - Chills;
 - Muscle Pain; and/or
 - New loss of taste or smell.
- Confirmation that the individual participating in the visit passed their health screen immediately prior to participating in the home visit;
- Addresses of any and all places the individual spent time during the home visit, including the names of other people spending time in close contact (within 6 feet) or proximate contact; AND
- Confirmation that the individual passed their health screen upon return from the home visit.

All logs may be required to be produced to OPWDD at any time.

D. Additional Safety Information, Guidelines, and Resources Available

New York State Department of Health Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/>

New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) Website
<https://opwdd.ny.gov/coronavirus-guidance>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>