

# **Considerations for Policy Development and Emergency Management Plans Related to COVID-19**

Introduction: This resource booklet will offer considerations to keep in mind when developing policies and procedures to maintain safe operations related to COVID-19.

## I. Infection Prevention Measures

### A. Communication

1. Identification of positive COVID-19 caregivers, self-advocates, and people outside of the agency
2. Communication between caregivers, families, self-advocates, and people outside of the agency
3. Plan for accommodations, modifications, and assistance needed for self-advocates, caregivers, and families
4. Plans should to be individualized

### B. Identify who is at highest risk

1. Identify those within your agency (including self-advocates, direct support caregivers, and volunteers) who are at highest risk for contracting the COVID-19 virus by looking at the type and amount of exposure that is present in their daily activities.
2. Consider creating a plan to review diagnoses (utilizing the health risk screening tool) and current health status of self-advocates to determine who is at highest risk.
3. Consider identifying individuals within your agency who may have been exposed through community or family contacts who have tested positive by specifically addressing this on your screening questionnaire, since approximately half of COVID-19 originate through contacts occurring at home (Goldman, December 15, 2020).
4. Consider a plan of protection for those who are at highest risk that includes the following areas:
  - a) *Outings in the community (caregivers and self-advocates)*
  - b) *Places of employment (caregivers and self-advocates)*
  - c) *Day programs (caregivers and self-advocates)*

### C. Create a plan to protect everyone using the following methods

1. Social distancing
  - a) *Consider difficulties of understanding and following directions.*

- b) How difficult is it to accomplish this within the environment and level of understanding of the individual?*
  - c) Consider all environments that caregivers and individuals may be in, including community, employment, day programs.*
- 2. Wearing a mask
  - a) Consider difficulties of understanding and following directions.*
  - b) Consider the sensory, cognitive, and behavioral concerns of the individual.*
  - c) Consider the physical ability of the individual to don/doff a mask.*
  - d) Consider establishing policies which encourage all those within the agency (including staff members, self-advocates, and volunteers) to wear masks while within the group home.*
  - e) Consider establishing policies which encourage all clients, who are able to comply, wear a mask when in public areas.*
- 3. Disinfection
  - a) Consider the techniques which will be utilized in housekeeping and decontamination.*
  - b) Consider the use of disinfection products regarding individuals or caregivers who may be sensitive to cleaning chemicals.*
- 4. Handwashing / Sanitizing
  - a) Consider a person's ability/need of assistance to perform the task*
  - b) Consider accessibility of handwashing/sanitizing facilities and products and establishing sanitizer stations to facilitate handwashing among staff and clients.*
  - c) Consider skin sensitivities and irritants*
  - d) Consider monitoring skin integrity and irritation*
- 5. Behavioral Plan
  - a) Consider including techniques to assist in prevention*
  - b) Consider including pictures, schedules, reminders, and caregiver modeling*

## **II. Mitigation of Community Spread**

- A. Screening (self-advocates, caregivers, and visitors in the home)
  - 1. Consider what questions will be included on the screening questionnaire?
  - 2. Consider who will be performing the screening questionnaire and temperature checks?

3. Consider who will be asked screening questions upon entry to the location?
4. Consider what level of personal protective equipment (PPE) will be worn by the screener?
5. Consider what happens if a person has a positive screening result? (fever, symptoms, or situational)
6. Consider the screening process outside of the home such as at day programs, places of employment and other community settings.
7. Consider people and services that are provided such as mail, utility workers, maintenance people who may enter the home.

## B. Education

1. Consider displaying clear and understandable prevention materials, such as posters, throughout homes and facilities in areas such as kitchens, bathrooms, and dining areas.
2. Consider the level of understanding and learning style of the individuals and caregivers. For example: visual learner, verbal learner, tactile learner, concrete thinker.
3. Consider implementing regular education for self-advocates and caregivers on handwashing/sanitizing.
4. Consider implementing regular education for self-advocates and caregivers on proper mask wearing, donning, and doffing.
5. Consider developing an agency policy on how to inquire about employee activity outside of work that is compliant with associated legalities.
6. Consider developing an action plan for employees to follow if they have participated in high-risk activities outside of work.
7. Consider developing policies that include safe practices for community outings (mask-wearing, size of gatherings, physical distancing, indoors vs. outdoors, hand sanitizing, etc.)
8. Consider offering distance-learning opportunities for employees and self-advocates.

### C. Essential Outings

1. Consider the screening process of the community and places where caregivers, families, and self-advocates may go, such as: grocery stores, pharmacies, provider offices, restaurants, places of employment, transportation.
2. Consider guidance and teaching for individuals who need to follow protocols outside of the home.
3. Consider a plan on maintaining health appointments.
  - a) *Telehealth physician appointments when available*
  - b) *Telehealth therapy/behavioral appointments when available*
  - c) *Remote meetings for supports coordination and/or other monitoring services*
4. Consider utilization of delivery/drive-thru/curbside pickup when available.
  - a) *Pharmacy/prescription delivery services*
  - b) *Groceries, cleaning supplies, toiletries*
  - c) *Take-out restaurant food*
5. Consider if there will be designated person(s) to transport, pick-up, and coordinate outings.
  - a) *Will there be a screening process for these people?*
  - b) *Should there be more than one person responsible for this, in the event that this person is unavailable or unable?*
6. Consider how someone will be transported for medical needs (testing, evaluation, treatment, emergency) for a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

## III. Action Plan / Strategies

### A. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

1. Consider the types of equipment needed in specific environments/situations (masks, face shields, eye protection, gloves, foot coverings, gowns)
2. Consider how much of each type of equipment is needed, where to obtain equipment, and how/where to dispose of properly.

3. Consider the education of how to properly don/doff and dispose of equipment including gowns, gloves, masks, face shields, foot coverings.
4. Consider creating an inventory of PPE to track and maintain the proper amount needed throughout agency offices, homes, and facilities.

B. Exposure, symptomatic, or positive COVID-19 test \*(Always check with the local health department / Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for guidance and updated information.)

1. Consider creating a step by step plan for caregivers, individuals and families to follow such as:
  - a) *Who to contact?*
  - b) *Where to get tested?*
  - c) *How to isolate/quarantine?*
  - d) *How long to isolate/quarantine?*
  - e) *When it is safe to reenter the community?*
  - f) *When is it safe to return to work?*
  - g) *If/when to be retested: consult personal physician and CDC guidance to determine need for retesting.*
2. Consider a plan of who to notify if someone has been exposed, is symptomatic or tests positive for COVID-19.
  - a) *Medical professionals*
  - b) *Agency supervisor(s) or designated COVID-19 response officer*
  - c) *Family*
  - d) *Recent close contacts*
3. Consider the home / facility environment.
  - a) *How will it be disinfected? By whom?*
  - b) *How will situations of shared bedrooms/bathrooms be addressed?*
  - c) *How will people with housemates be able to access needed areas of the home and supplies safely, such as: bathrooms, kitchen for food, medication storage/administration?*
4. Consider a plan for what to do if a caregiver, family member, or volunteer becomes symptomatic while caring for an individual.
  - a) *Immediately donning a mask, if not already on.*
  - b) *Remaining safely physically distanced from others.*
  - c) *Contacting supervisor/administrator.*
  - d) *Establish policies so that symptomatic caregiver, family member, or volunteer will not need to continue to care for the individual.*

e) *Plan should include information regarding who was exposed, so that immediate action can be taken.*

C. Prepare for staffing shortages.

1. Consider a plan for training and educating caregivers on prevention inside/outside of the workplace.
2. Consider monitoring system for caregivers on burnout, stress, anxiety, fatigue, and depression.
3. Consider a plan of maintaining individuals in familiar environments if staffing shortage.
4. Consider a plan of how to maintain a schedule/routine for individuals.

References:

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