

**New Jersey Department of Human Services  
Office of Program Integrity and Accountability**

November 18, 2020

Dear Providers:

The Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and the Office of Program Integrity and Accountability (OPIA) continue to closely monitor the fluid nature of the COVID-19 health emergency and proactively respond by implementing strategies to further safeguard the health, safety and well-being of individuals receiving services, their guardians and families, providers and our employees.

NJ state government remains open. It is critical that DHS and its providers continue to work together to maintain important oversight and do all we can to assist individuals and their families.

The current health situation necessitates that effective 11/23/20, OPIA is temporarily pausing its non-emergency field activities and targeting field-related responses to those situations where a field response is critical to ensuring immediate health and safety. Visits will resume as soon as possible.

Specific strategies include the following:

- The Field Safety and Services Unit (FSSU) will maintain and expand tele-visits with an ongoing emphasis on immediate health and safety concerns.
- The Incident Verification Unit (IVU) staff will continue virtual verification activities and all incidents involving abuse and neglect will be screened by a an IVU supervisor to determine the most appropriate verification method.
- The Office of Licensing (OOL) will utilize established inspection protocols as determined by the OOL supervisor.

In addition to the measures identified above, it is expected that all providers maintain ongoing, direct administrative oversight of their respective sites and ensure consistent implementation of the identified, rigorous health and safety protocols within these settings. As a reminder, in September, 2020, DHS, the Department of Health and DDD issued detailed guidance to providers; all of which is available on the Department of Human Services Coronavirus Information Hub and the Department of Health COVID-19 Information Hub. This critically important guidance includes tracking of provider surge planning, risk mitigation strategies, such as regular health screenings, monitoring for signs and symptoms of illness, wearing masks and social distancing.

Please note that failure of any Division-funded residential provider to implement all applicable COVID-related health and safety protocols may be determined to constitute neglect of individuals served. Further, such a finding of neglect may result in the imposition of negative licensing or other administrative/legal action against the responsible entity.

Please continue to closely monitor compliance across all residential locations and ensure that all program supervisors, managers and staff understand and consistently adhere to the requirements.

Thank you for your cooperation and continued commitment to maintaining the health and safety of the individuals we mutually serve.

Sincerely,

Lauri Woodward  
Director, Office of Program Integrity and Accountability