

The New Jersey Department of Human Services  
**Division of Developmental Disabilities**

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CORONAVIRUS DISEASE  
(COVID-19)  
UPDATE FOR FAMILIES AND  
PROVIDERS

June 24, 2021



# Agenda

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- COVID-19 Statistics
- July Webinar
- Additional Year of Special Education
- Information on Vaccines
- Updated Day Program Guidance
- Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)
- Updated Screening Document
- Resources

# New Jersey COVID-19 Current Statistics\*

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State of New Jersey	
Positive	891,840
Deaths	23,712

*\*This update is as of Wednesday, June 23, 2021.*

**For regular updates: <https://covid19.nj.gov/>**

**Consider downloading COVID Alert NJ on your Apple or Android smartphone:**

**<https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/app>**



# DDD Specific COVID-19 Statistics\*

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	Community		Developmental Centers	Total
	Licensed	Own Home		
Positive	1,888	644	661	3,193
Deaths	115	60	41	216

*\*DDD-specific statistics are updated weekly. Community data includes individuals **actively** under DDD services in settings such as group homes, supervised apartments, out of state, and own-home settings.*

*Full detail, including data for individuals not under services for whom reporting is voluntary and provided for informational purposes only, can be found at [NJ Department of Human Services COVID-19 Information](#).*

# COVID-19 Update Webinar Schedule

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- Webinars will move to monthly starting in July 2021
- July Update webinar:
  - Thursday July 15, 2021 – 10:30 am
- Use the link below to register:

[Register Now for July 15 Webinar](#)

# Additional Year of Special Education

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- Signed by Governor Murphy on June 16, 2021
- Provides a temporary one-year extension of special education and related services to students with disabilities who exceed/will exceed, current age of eligibility for special education and related services in school years 2020-2021, 2021-2022, or 2022-2023.
- Education and/or services deemed necessary by student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

# Additional Year of Special Education

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- DDD eligible students who are receiving services through their school beyond their educational entitlement will be able to access DDD services that are not duplicative to those being provided by the school district.
- For example, if a student is going to continue receiving Physical Therapy through the school, they would not be able to access that service with their DDD budget.

# Additional Year of Special Education

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- If the student is going to continue school **full** time, employment or day services would be duplicative, but other services that are not duplicative would be available. These include, but are not limited to, vehicle modifications, environmental modifications, and respite.



# Additional Year of Special Education

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- If you are unsure whether the school service is duplicative to a DDD service, it is recommended that the Support Coordinator seek additional details about the school service from the student/family or school in order to compare it to DDD services and make a determination.
- Questions can be directed to [DDD.TransitionHelpdesk@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.TransitionHelpdesk@dhs.nj.gov).

# Information on Vaccines

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- COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized in the United States are effective against COVID-19, including severe disease.
- Preliminary evidence suggests that the currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines may provide some protection against a variety of SARS-CoV-2 strains.
- A growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people are less likely to have asymptomatic infection and potentially less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others. Further investigation is ongoing.

# Information on Vaccines

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- The risks of COVID-19 infection in fully vaccinated people cannot be completely eliminated. Vaccinated people could potentially still get COVID-19 and spread it to others.
- At this time, there is limited data on vaccine protection in people who are immunocompromised.
- People with immunocompromising conditions, including those taking immunosuppressive medications, should discuss the need for personal protective measures after vaccination with their healthcare provider.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- On June 16, 2021, Updated Day Program Guidance was released.
- This is an evolution of the previous guidance and provides more flexibility.
- Intention is that flexibilities will expand as vaccination rates increase and COVID-19 infection rates continue to decrease.
- DHS/DDD encourages all to be vaccinated.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- **Summary of Newest Guidance**
  - Providers are directed to re-open and move to 100% capacity.
  - Given the present staffing shortage across the system, providers will need time to reach 100% capacity.
  - Providers of services for medically fragile persons **may** elect to limit capacity before moving to full enrollment and enact additional protocols based on the health needs of participants.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- It is important to note that, even with prudent steps being taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection, neither the day program provider nor the Division can guarantee that transmission of COVID-19, or one of its variants, will not occur.
- Individuals, families/guardians, and providers must monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. If an individual is positive for COVID-19 or unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated and has been exposed to COVID-19 they are not permitted to attend a day program until cleared by a medical professional.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- The COVID-19 Activity Level Index is no longer used to indicate capacity or program re-opening/closure.
- Providers are permitted to inquire about vaccination status of participants, visitors and staff so long as they follow all privacy requirements and are in compliance with HIPAA protections (e.g., do not ask the status in front of others) and any other applicable federal or state laws.
- Visitors are not required to provide this information. If vaccination status is unknown, then it is to be assumed that the person is not vaccinated.
- Providers may establish their own policies regarding staff vaccination.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- All individuals, staff, contracted professionals, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, must be cleared for admittance to the facility through screening, including temperature checks, as outlined in the [Residential and Day Program Screening Policy](#).
- The only exception to required screening is for first responders entering the program in their official capacity.



# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- All staff, regardless of vaccination status, must continue to wear a well-fitted face mask when working, unless doing so would create a risk to workplace health, safety or job duty as assessed by the employer, and physically distance (as appropriate for the care of residents) when working with participants and other staff.
- Group sizes shall no longer be limited but is recommended to be 15 or fewer individuals and that, to the extent practicable, that the same group composition be maintained.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- If **all** participants and staff in a group are fully vaccinated, participants and staff may choose to remove their mask and may have close contact with others in the group without a mask.
- If a group contains one or more unvaccinated staff or participant, **ALL** staff in the group **MUST** mask and socially distance from unvaccinated persons as appropriate for the care of the participant(s). Participants in the group who are able **MUST** wear a well-fitted face mask and unvaccinated participants should physically distance from others in the group.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- If vaccination status cannot be determined for all group participants, the safest practice is for all participants to follow all recommended infection prevention and control practices including maintaining physical distancing and wearing a well-fitted face mask.
- Fully vaccinated program participants can elect not to wear a mask when outdoors.
- Fully vaccinated staff can elect not to wear a mask when outdoors if the participants in the group they are working with are fully vaccinated.
- Cleaning, handwashing and wearing appropriate PPE while providing physical care are still required.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- Individuals (regardless of vaccination status) transported by the day services provider shall be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to entering the vehicle and conduct temperature screen prior to entering the vehicle.
- The driver or other program staff can deny transportation to a day program if the individual is demonstrating symptoms.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- The day provider will provide transportation in the safest manner possible to reduce transmission of COVID-19. This includes
  - ✦ Having staff wear a well-fitted face mask; and
  - ✦ Providing ventilation through the opening of windows and use of vehicle HVAC systems to circulate fresh air.
- Standard vehicle occupancy can be used.
- If all participants and staff on a vehicle are fully vaccinated masking is not required.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- If one or more participants or staff on the vehicle are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated/vaccination status unknown all participants who are able must wear a well-fitted face mask during the trip.
- In this circumstance, it is *recommended* that vehicle capacity be limited to one rider per row.
- Participants and their caretaker(s) need to be made aware by the day program provider of the risks associated with congregate transportation for unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated/persons with vaccination status unknown in relation to contracting COVID-19.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- Visitation in the center shall be limited during operating hours to those that are essential to operations (maintenance or repair services, prospective admissions, prospective employees, planning team meetings, etc.).
- Routine or annual meetings shall continue to take place virtually when possible and appropriate.

# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- Facilities that become aware of a positive case or exposure must continue to contact their local health department to seek advice on closure.
- Regardless of vaccination status, if an individual or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 at the facility immediately separate them from the others in an isolation area until they depart from the program.



# Updated Day Program Guidance

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- Regardless of vaccination status, if a staff member or participant tests positive for COVID-19, they cannot return until the criteria for lifting transmission-based precautions and home isolation have been met **and** they have been cleared to end isolation by a healthcare professional.
- Fully vaccinated staff/participants who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and who are asymptomatic should not be restricted from work/program for 14 days following their exposure. Additionally, those asymptomatic staff/residents who have recovered from COVID-19 infection in the prior three months should follow the same guidance.

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- On June 16, 2021 updated guidance was released.
- Summary of Newest Guidance:
  - Any staff, regardless of vaccination status, must continue to wear a well-fitted face mask unless doing so would create a risk to workplace health, safety or job duty as assessed by the employer, and physically distance (as appropriate for the care of residents) when working with staff and residents who are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated.

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- Providers are permitted to inquire about vaccination status of participants, visitors and staff so long as they follow all privacy requirements and are in compliance with HIPAA protections, (e.g., do not ask the status in front of other others) and any other applicable federal or state law.
- Visitors are not required to provide this information.
- If vaccination status is unknown then it is to be assumed the person is not vaccinated.
- Providers may establish their own policies regarding staff vaccination.

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- Regardless of vaccination status, staff and residents who have recently tested positive for or have symptoms of COVID-19 and have not yet met the criteria for the discontinuation of isolation should follow CDC recommendations found at [What to Do If You Are Sick](#). This includes staying home except to get medical care, separating yourself from other people, etc.
- Symptomatic staff shall not be permitted to work.
- Symptomatic residents shall be tested at the direction of a healthcare professional and not engage in any type of visitation unless cleared by their healthcare professional.

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- Residents who are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated who have recently had close contact (less than 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a period of 24 hours) with a person with COVID-19 shall be placed in quarantine until they meet the requirements for release from quarantine by a healthcare professional. This may include testing for COVID-19.
- Staff who are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated and who have had close contact to a person with COVID-19 should be excluded from work per NJDOH Guidance for COVID-19 Diagnosed and/or Exposed Healthcare Personnel.

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- Indoor, outdoor and off-site visits are permitted for any resident and their visitor(s), regardless of vaccination status.
- Providers may require visits to be scheduled in advance, as was allowed pre-pandemic.
- Each person participating in a visit must adhere to the protocols described in [Screening in Residential and Congregate Day Program Settings](#).

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- For indoor and outdoor visits, fully vaccinated residents and their fully vaccinated visitors are not required to wear a mask or socially distance when alone during their visit.
- Visitors should wear a well-fitted mask and physically distance from other staff/residents/visitors with whom they are not visiting.

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- If visitors or residents being visited with are not fully vaccinated visitors are to wear a well-fitting face mask.
- The resident is to wear a well-fitting face mask as tolerated/medically advisable.
- The safest approach is for everyone to maintain physical distancing and to wear source control. However, if the resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their unvaccinated visitor(s) while both continue to wear well-fitting source control.
- Visitors should wear a well-fitted mask and physically distance from other staff/residents/visitors with whom they are not visiting.



# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- Indoor visitation in congregate residential settings is required so long as:
  - ✦ There have been no resident positive cases in the last 14 days;
  - ✦ No residents in the home are currently symptomatic; and
  - ✦ There has been no staff positive in the last 14 days who have exposed unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated residents.
- For symptomatic residents (regardless of vaccination status), testing as directed by a healthcare professional shall occur.
- Indoor visits should not take place during that period unless result(s) are negative for all symptomatic and/or unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated residents.

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- If a staff member who had contact with residents tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days it does not preclude indoor visits if all the residents are vaccinated.
- If one or more residents of the home are not fully vaccinated and were exposed, indoor visits shall not take place until 14 days have passed. Testing for COVID-19 as directed by a healthcare professional shall occur.
- Providers shall share with visitors whether any staff who worked in the home have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days to inform whether the visitor still wishes to engage in a visit.

# Updated Residential Guidance (Group Homes)

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- Off-site visits, whether for a few hours or overnight, must be permitted for residents who are not currently positive of or symptomatic for COVID-19.
- Regardless of vaccination status, a resident does not have to isolate upon return to the residential setting unless they report exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 while on an off-site visit.
- If this is the case, a 14 day quarantine period is required. Testing for COVID-19 as directed for the resident(s) by a healthcare professional shall occur.

# Updated Screening Document

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- Released on June 16, 2021, the document contains the updates described previously in this presentation.
- Includes a domestic travel question of whether the person traveled within the last 14 days to a state other than Delaware, New York or Pennsylvania and not followed CDC guidance upon return.
- This question applies only to unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated persons.

# Important Resources

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- Disability Rights New Jersey
  - 1-800-922-7233 (toll-free in New Jersey only)
- Ombudsman for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and their Families
  - 1-609-984-7764
- New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities
  - 1-800-792-8858

# Important Resources

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- For assistance during this time:
  - For issues, call the Division Community Services office for your county or 1 (800) 832-9173.
  - When calling, you will be connected with the Division's answering service who will take information about the circumstance and have a Division staff person reach out.
  - For routine questions: [DDD.FeeForService@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.FeeForService@dhs.nj.gov)
  - For COVID-related questions: [DDD.COVID-19@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.COVID-19@dhs.nj.gov)
  - To report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation: call 1 (800) 832-9173, then press 1.

# Highlighted Resources

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- For individuals, families and caregivers
  - [Boggs Center COVID-19 Information and Resources](#)
- For individuals:
  - NJ Self-Advocacy Project's [Stay Healthy at Home Webinar Series](#)
- For Direct Support Professionals
  - [National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals \(NADSP\) COVID-19 Toolkit for DSPs](#)
  - [CDC Guidance for Direct Service Providers](#)