



State of Vermont

Department of Mental Health
280 State Drive, NOB 2 North
Waterbury, VT 05671-2010
<http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/>

Agency of Human Services

[phone] 802-241-0090
[fax] 802-241-0100
[tty] 800-253-0191

MEMORANDUM

TO: Designated Agency Staff
FROM: Sarah Squirrel, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health
DATE: March 19, 2020
SUBJECT: Guidance for Home-Based Service Providers

**PLEASE NOTE – this information may be superseded by subsequent guidance.
Always check [Vermont Department of Health](#) for updated information.**

This memo provides COVID-19 information and programmatic guidance home-based services staff.

Important COVID-19 Information

For the most up-to-date guidance on precautions, screening questions and service restrictions, please refer to these web pages:

- [Vermont Department of Health](#)
- [Department of Labor](#)
- [Department of Mental Health](#)

As of Thursday, March 18, the Governor had issued an [Executive Order](#), two addendums and further guidance ([March 15](#), [March 16](#) & [March 17](#)) strictly limiting public access to licensed facilities and group congregations and closing childcare centers and restaurants and bars with the exception of take out and food delivery.

The limits on gatherings prohibits all “non-essential mass gatherings.”

- The group must be fewer than 50 people or make up less than 50% of the room’s official occupancy.
- The prohibition includes “confined outdoor space.”
- A "non-essential mass gathering" does not include normal operations at airports, bus or railway stations. It also does not include typical office environments or retail or grocery stores where large numbers of people are present, but where it is unusual for them to be within arm's length of one another.

Program Guidance for the Delivery of Essential Home-Based Services

As a reminder, people may be asymptomatic carriers of the COVID-19 virus and the individuals you serve may have underlying health conditions that could make them high risk. Therefore, the

Vermont Department of Health (VDH) has issued [guidance](#) on the delivery of home-based services with the goal of minimizing person-to-person contact to reduce the spread of the virus. In this guidance, “home-based services” are services coming into a person’s home and do not include live-in services (such as providers).

As described in the VDH guidance, the current priority is ensuring that “essential” home-based services continue. “Essential services” are services that assure the health and safety of a person.

Examples of “essential services” include:

- Medication management
- Clinical Supports and/or nursing services
- Food availability
- Obtaining essential home supplies related to health and sanitation
- Ensuring human contact

All **non-essential** home-based services should be suspended if alternative remote delivery methods are not available. For example, regular, non-essential case management/service coordination check-ins should happen by phone or other remote methods such as Facetime or Skype.

To inform people about COVID-19 and the State’s guidelines, please address the following items during case management/service coordination check-ins with children, youth and families.

- Use the “[Recommended Precautions for Caregivers](#)” document to educate consumers, their family and caregiver(s) about COVID-19 symptoms, precautions and what to do if they have symptoms.
- Assure an adequate supply of medications and healthcare supplies is available in the home.
- Assure enough food supplies and that nutrition needs are being met.
- Review and update the consumer’s backup plan as needed.
- Determine if there are family members in the home who can provide care.
- Identify and confirm emergency contacts.
- Prioritize essential services such as personal care and obtaining food/supplies.
- Discuss creative ways to get services in a manner that reduces in-person contact with consumers.
- Inform consumers that **non-essential** services will be suspended or modified.
- Inform the consumer, their family and caregiver(s) that their case manager/service coordinator is the primary contact for addressing interruptions in essential services.

Direct service providers are encouraged to prioritize services to people at highest risk and in need of essential services.

For additional questions about the delivery of essential home-based services or program guidance, please send them to Jennifer.rowell@vermont.gov