



Guidance for In-Home Visitation and Screening of Youth and Visitors to Offices, Facilities and Programs

Mike DeWine, Governor
Lori Criss, Director

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is committed to assuring that every adult, child, and family in need of mental health or addiction services has access to appropriate resources.

Today, COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus, presents a major challenge to our ability to provide optimal services to adults, children and families with behavioral health needs in the State of Ohio. The purpose of this memorandum is to make sure you know we are committed to ensure the community and our workforce is protected at all times.

As we continue to monitor the evolution of this major pandemic in our country, we realize the need to make major adjustments to our behavioral health practice so that we keep our workforce, adults, children, and families safe. Of particular concern are those frontline workers charged with the responsibility of providing in-home services to families.

Our overall message to you is your safety matters to us.

The guidance we are providing is based on the most up-to-date Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) recommendations for preventing of the spread of COVID-19 and managing the people who may have had contact with infected individuals.

We are also providing additional guidance for congregate care and non-congregate care programs licensed, funded or regulated by the Department.

Please review this information, including the links below, with your program's leadership and staff and make any necessary adjustments to your program's policies and protocols. This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as this event evolves throughout our state and country.

A. Three Week Postponement of all Non-Essential Meetings and Trainings

In order to focus on our critical priorities over the next three weeks, all scheduled non-essential meetings and trainings are to be postponed beginning April 6, 2020.

B. Guidance when Making Home Visits (including Mobile Crisis and Mobile Response Stabilization Services):

Although we are not able to suspend home visits all together, we ask that you utilize telehealth modalities whenever possible. When an intervention in the home is required, we ask you to assess the home you are visiting in advance to determine if there are any risk factors that will put your health in jeopardy (similar to assessing a home and neighborhood for safety from violence before you go out).

When preparing or scheduling appointments for in-home visits, be sure to ask all clients, or applicable family members, the following three questions regarding each individual living in the home:

1. Do you currently have symptoms of coronavirus (cough, fever of 100.4°F or higher or shortness of breath)?

2. Have you had direct personal contact with someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus?
3. Have you been tested for the coronavirus?

- If the client or family members respond “Yes” to any of these questions, immediately consult your supervisor to assess whether there are any potentially urgent safety risks or behavioral health needs (e.g., medications, suicide or violence risk, etc.) which require a response.
- If there are urgent needs, the chain of command in your office should assess whether those needs can be safely met remotely (e.g., telephone assessment, telehealth visit, e-prescribing, etc.). If the client must be seen to meet urgent needs, including behavioral health needs, the client should be instructed to remain at home and to contact their medical professional immediately. Instruct the impacted client or family member to get assessed by a medical professional before any visitation arrangements are made.
- If the client does not have urgent needs or those needs can be met remotely, please instruct the family/client to stay home and to contact the Ohio Department of Health at (614) 466-3543 or 833-427-5634) or their local health department for further guidance, which may include a recommendation for a self-imposed isolation of 14 days.
- If the client or family members respond “Yes” to the first question (i.e., reports having symptoms), they should be instructed to remain at home and contact their medical professional immediately.
- In all circumstances above, please instruct the client or family member to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.
- Please document your decision in the families’ record if you decided a home visit poses a threat of any kind. Do not put yourself in jeopardy.

C. Hotline calls:

We are also asking that all hotlines screen for the same three questions outlined above and let the mobile response stabilization services staff know the answers by documenting the responses from the reporter in the body of the report. This information should help you decide whether to conduct a face-to-face home visit or to contact the family to determine if a form of telehealth is possible. Again, if there is a safety factor that requires you to conduct a face-to-face visit, please use the process mentioned earlier in this memo.

D. Congregate Care Programs Funded, Licensed or Regulated by DCF:

The protocol below is applicable to any facility or program that receives visitors or members of the public as a part of its daily operations.

- All facilities, programs and offices receiving regular, in-person contact with members of the public should immediately develop policies to schedule and pre-screen over the telephone visits by non-client/residents-or-staff entities, including families, attorneys, case managers and social workers, using the three questions above.
- Upon screening, if a potential visitor answers “yes” to any of the three questions above, please politely instruct them not to visit the facility, program or office until the specific scenario can be further assessed.
- Any potential visitor who answers “yes” to the first question should be instructed to immediately contact their medical provider and to call 911 if they are experiencing serious symptoms (e.g., shortness of breath).
- Please also instruct the screened individual to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.
- If facilities/program providers receive unscheduled visitors, either politely instruct them to leave and call to schedule a visit, or screen them appropriately before allowing entrance into the facility/program.
- If upon screening, the unscheduled visitor answers “yes” to any of the questions above, politely ask

them to leave and reschedule a visit after two weeks. Also, recommend that they contact their own medical professional for further instructions.

- In all circumstances above, please also instruct the screened individual to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.

E. Screening for Current Residents at Child Serving Facilities and Congregate Care and Non-Congregate Care Programs Funded, Licensed or Regulated by OhioMHAS:

All OhioMHAS facilities and congregate care programs funded, licensed or regulated by OhioMHAS should be certain to screen any incoming residents using the guidance above, and should respond accordingly if a resident is experiencing symptoms. Please utilize the following procedures if an incoming resident answers “yes” to any of the above questions:

- Provide a mask for the recipient of services/resident.
- If possible, isolate the recipient of services/resident in a private room with the door closed if possible and ensure that they are kept separate from other tenants.
- A program medical provider should then immediately assess the individual using appropriate personal protective equipment, or if the person should be asked to contact their own medical professional immediately. The programs should also contact the Ohio Department of Health for further recommendations, including transport to their recommended medical facility if necessary. Please also instruct the program to notify the receiving medical provider and transportation in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.

All OhioMHAS facilities and congregate care and non-congregate care programs funded, licensed or regulated by Ohio MHAS should continue to review their own emergency preparedness plans and assess for continued operation in case of an emergency. We ask that particular focus occurs on the following points:

- All facilities and programs should assess both their facility and workforce capacity to accommodate the potential need for an increased number of isolation rooms and the potential decrease in staffing availability.
- As a result of the above assessment, programs may need to prioritize service provision and planning.
- If the needs of the facility/program exceed current capacity or ability, please contact the relevant the Recovery and Mental Health board and the OhioMHAS for further assistance.

Additionally, all the above facilities/programs/providers should contact any entities that have staff regularly visiting their programs (e.g., contracted/per diem staffing agencies, pharmacy delivery organizations, itinerant provider staff, cleaning agencies, etc.) to review and approve their screening protocols. If the protocols of outside entities do not meet these standards, providers should take responsibility for screening these visitors.

F. Telehealth

- Office of Civil Rights, Health and Human Services Issues Guidance on Telehealth: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/03/20/ocr-issues-guidance-on-telehealth-remote-communications-following-its-notification-of-enforcement-discretion.html>
- Read the Emergency Rules Expand Access to Behavioral Health Services Using Telehealth from Ohio department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Department of Medicaid: https://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/coronavirus/MITS_BITS_on_Telehealth_3.20.2020_FINAL.pdf

Home Visit Safety Recommendations

- Consider alternatives to in-person meetings. See telehealth guidelines from OhioMHAS (attached)

- If you and your agency decide to do a home-visit, provide a screening call before you visit to ask about health issues; particularly fevers and coughs.
- Respect the family's preferences about people coming into their home during this crisis. Ask them what they are comfortable with.
- Pre-structure new safety protocols and procedures with the family. Emphasize that this is for their safety/mutual protection.
- Wash your hands a throughout the day.

Protect the Family

Before entering the home:

- Disinfect whatever items you are taking into the home.
- Use hand sanitizer prior to entering the home.
- Use a disinfectant spray on the soles of your shoes prior to entering the family's home.

Protect Yourself

During the Home Visit:

- Conduct sessions in areas of the home that allow 6-foot distancing between you and the family.
- If someone appears ill with COVID-19 symptoms, politely leave/reschedule.
- If the home environment does not allow enough space for 6-foot distancing between you and the family, consider an alternate location.
- Avoid touching surfaces as much as possible.

Before you enter your car after a visit:

- Use hand sanitizers prior to entering your car.
- Disinfect whatever items you took into the family's homes (spray or wipes) before placing them back in the care.
- Use a disinfectant spray on the soles of your shoes before re-entering your car.

Upon returning home:

- Wash your hands immediately.
- Disinfect the inside of your car with a disinfectant spray.
- Take your shoes off before entering your home. Re-spray the soles of your shoes.
- Disinfect items used during the day: phone, computer, pens, etc. Alternatively place them in a plastic garbage bag for cleaning prior to bringing into your home.
- Follow your agency and state guidelines and recommendations.
- Follow CDC guidance about sanitary procedures to prevent the spread of the virus, and to maintain personal health (see CDC resource below)

Finally, as a reminder, all Staff/Providers should follow the CDC's guidelines for infection control basics including hand hygiene:

- Hand Hygiene in Health Care Settings
- Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives
- Infection Control Basics

Additional information can also be accessed here:

COVID-19 Resources:

- State of Ohio: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov>
- CDC Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/workplace-school-and-home-guidance.pdf>
- CDC Webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- State of Ohio (Cleaning-Disinfecting Alternatives): <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/covid-19-checklists/005-covid-19-checklist-for-cleaning-disinfecting-alternatives>
- CDC Steps to Prevent COVID 19: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fprevention-treatment.html
- CDC: Mental Health and Coping: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>
- CDC: Talking to Kids about COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>
- Spanish version: <https://childmind.org/article/como-hablar-con-los-ninos-sobre-el-coronavirus/>
- HIPAA and Telehealth Guidance: <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/emergency-preparedness/notification-enforcement-discretion-telehealth/index.html>

The Crisis Kit: 5 tools for helping clients through turbulent times

- A PDF fillable 41-page document. There is also an audio file and a YouTube version: <https://positivepsychology.com/the-crisis-kit/>

Corona Virus Social Story

- <https://www.flipsnack.com/KeshetChicago/coronavirus-social-story/full-view.html>

Virtual Fieldtrips

- <http://howtohomeschoolforfree.com/huge-list-of-virtual-field-trips>
- <https://adventuresinfamilyhood.com/20-virtual-field-trips-to-take-with-your-kids.html>

Free Musicals to Watch

- <https://www.playbill.com/article/15-broadway-plays-and-musicals-you-can-watch-on-stage-from-home>

Scholastic is offering free online courses so your kids can keep learning while schools are out

- <https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>

Headspace is FREE for Mental Health Professionals

- <https://www.headspace.com/health-covid-19>