

## **Questions & Answers for Individuals and Their Families**

### **If I live in a group home or supervised apartment, what are my options when my day program closes?**

Your residential provider will arrange for in-home activities appropriate to your needs and interests. As with the day program setting requirements, providers may not transport or gather individuals from multiple residences to a single location for community outings, regardless of the services delivered at that location.

Residential providers, however, may continue to plan home and community activities for individuals who live together, much as other households are doing during this time. These activities must be consistent with the advice of public health authorities to avoid large gatherings or areas where groups of people congregate.

Please keep in mind that public health authorities may be restricting certain activities.

### **If I live in a private or family home, what are my options when my day program closes?**

If you already have authorized hours for in-home providers and self-directed employee (SDE) services that meet your needs, you do not need to take any action. Your providers and SDEs will continue to be reimbursed as usual.

You may also contact your Support Coordinator to arrange for in-home services or hiring an SDE. Due to the circumstances, your Support Coordinator may not be able to approve an updated service plan before the service is provided. In order to ensure payment to the service providers, you will need to document the hours worked and services provided. Please work with your Support Coordinator to update your service plan as soon as possible, and no later than May 1, 2020.

### **With my day program closed, will in-home providers and self-directed employees (SDEs) be permitted to provide more hours than authorized in my service plan?**

Yes, during this period, in-home providers and SDEs may work more than the hours approved in your service plan, as long the hours do not exceed your overall budget. Due to the circumstances, your Support Coordinator may not be able to approve an updated service plan before the service is provided. Therefore, please work with your Support Coordinator to update your service plan as soon as possible, and no later than May 1, 2020.

In order to ensure payment to the SDE, you will need to document the hours worked and services provided. Guidance on timesheet submission and payment for these hours will be provided as soon as possible.

Your in-home provider should track the additional hours worked and document the services provided. They will be able to submit these claims for reimbursement after your Support Coordinator updates the service plan.

### **With my day program closed, will self-directed employees be permitted to work over 40 hours per week in order to provide authorized or additional hours?**

Yes, during this period, self-directed employees may temporarily work over 40 hours a week if needed to cover the hours authorized in your service plan. For example, if you are authorized for 50 hours, a single employee may work for all of them, if needed.

In order to ensure payment to the SDE, you will need to document the hours worked and services provided. Guidance on timesheet submission and payment for these hours will be provided as soon as possible.

If an SDE is going to provide more hours than authorized in your service plan, please refer to the question above for actions required by the Support Coordinator. For example, if you are authorized for 40 hours and a single employee works 50 hours in order to meet your needs, the additional hours are permitted and the employee is permitted to work overtime, as long the hours do not exceed your overall budget.

**Can I hire a parent, spouse, or guardian as a self-directed employee?**

Yes, the Division is temporarily lifting the restriction on a parent, spouse or guardian becoming an SDE. However, the regular hiring process must be followed. Contact your Support Coordinator for information on how to enroll with the fiscal intermediary. Individuals and families are encouraged to develop a backup plan in case an SDE or a provider is unable to provide care. Talk to family and friends about how they might help.

**Is there a way to expedite the hiring of additional SDEs?**

Yes. Please see the relevant question and answer in the *Information on Division and Licensing Operations* section of this document.

**Information for Families of Individuals Living in Residential Settings**

**Can I visit my loved one who resides in a residential setting?**

Yes, however, some providers are establishing screening protocols to ensure the health and safety of all individuals living and working in the home. You should contact the residence manager ahead of your visit to see what those protocols may be and what you need to do before visiting.

**Can I take my loved one home from their residential setting for a visit or until this situation passes?**

Yes, however, the residential provider may restrict an individual from returning if they pose a risk to other household members due to COVID-19 exposure or symptoms. Therefore, it is important that you are ready and able to care for your loved one for an extended period of time at your home, including a backup plan if they become sick. A discussion and planning session with the individual's residential provider is strongly encouraged. Also, please review the COVID-19 guidance documents provided by the Division: <https://nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/news/news/index.html#2>

**Can my residential provider refuse to take my loved one back into the group home?**

A provider cannot refuse services unless the Division's discharge process is followed. However, providers may establish screening protocols to ensure the health and safety of all individuals living and working in the home. This may include things like medical clearance or a screening by provider staff.