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Dear DDS Community:

With the recent policy changes across the country and news about the Delta variant, I know you are wondering how this impacts DDS programs and your loved ones, and what steps we are taking to keep them safe. This week, we are announcing major updates to our congregate care surveillance testing program and also releasing updated guidance for visitation, group homes, and day programs.

First, we will be testing more often and including vaccinated staff in surveillance testing again. Weekly surveillance testing of all staff working in congregate care programs will help us identify cases quickly. As is current practice, any time a positive case is identified, testing will occur right away for all staff and residents. Please note, the current isolation and quarantine policies have not changed.

Second, we encourage masking more often, even for fully vaccinated people. While fully vaccinated residents do not need to wear a mask in their own home, staff will continue to wear masks in day programs and group homes, and we ask that all visitors wear a mask inside programs, even if fully vaccinated. The goal is to not restrict visitation, prevent you from embracing of your loved one, or limit your ability to spend time with them. Masking and testing helps us do that.

Third, we continue to encourage COVID-19 vaccinations for all. You may arrange an [In-Home Vaccination](#) by calling 1-833-983-0485, find a vaccination site near you using the [VaxFinder website](#), or work with a group to schedule a [Mobile Vaccination Clinic](#). If you need help, please contact your DDS Service Coordinator.



On the pages that follow, please find vaccination resources and links to updated guidance for group homes and day programs.

As always, please stay in contact with your Service Coordinator and Area Office and follow the Department on our website (mass.gov/dds) and social media (@ddsmass) for the latest updates.

Take good care,

Jane



Surveillance Testing Program

- Weekly surveillance testing for all congregate care staff, even if they are fully vaccinated, starting August 12.

Wearing Masks

- Fully vaccinated group home residents are not required to wear a mask in their home.
- Individuals served by DDS should follow the public mask guidance in public settings.
- All staff are required to wear a mask while working in congregate care programs and day programs.

Visitation

We have asked our residential settings to return to their pre-pandemic visitation policies and practices with the following exceptions:

- All visitors are now asked to wear masks indoors.
- Continued screening of all visitors for symptoms of illness and COVID-19 infection.
- Suspended visitation when a resident is isolating due to COVID infection or there is a COVID-19 outbreak at the program.
- Staff are required to wear masks in group homes, regardless of vaccination status.

Vaccination Update

- [In-Home Vaccinations](#) are available to anyone with trouble getting to a vaccination site. Call 1-833-983-0485 to schedule your in-home vaccination.
- **Call 2-1-1** to schedule an appointment over the phone.
- Use the [VaxFinder](#) website to search for appointments at pharmacies, health care providers, and other community locations.

If you need help planning a COVID-19 vaccination for an individual served by DDS, please contact your DDS Service Coordinator.



Please see below for helpful links and resources:

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- Massachusetts vaccine information: mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine
- Find available appointments using VaxFinder.mass.gov
- [In-Home Vaccination Program](#)
- [Mobile Vaccination Program](#)
- [Register for the VaxMillions Giveaway](#)
- [FAQ: Transportation to COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments for MassHealth Members](#)
- [Vaccine Appointment Guide](#)
 - [What to Know Before You Go](#)
 - [What You Need for Your Appointment](#)
- [Vaccine FAQ: Vaccine Safety](#)
- [Vaccine FAQ in multiple languages](#)

Visitation Guidance

- [Visitation Guidance for DDS Residential Programs](#)

Guidance for DDS Programs

- [Residential and Congregate Care Program Guidance](#)
- [Congregate Care Surveillance Testing Guidance](#)
- [Day Program Guidance](#)
- [Human Services Transportation Guidance](#)
- [Human Services Transportation Plan Checklist](#)

DDS Resources

- [Visit the DDS website](#)
- [Contact a DDS Area Office](#)
- [Interactive DDS Regional Map](#)
- Follow @DDSMass on social media
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Twitter](#)
 - [Instagram](#)