



Meeting Life's Challenges

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July 7, 2021

Dear Families & Friends:

We asked, you answered, changes were made!

On June 24, we asked you to take a moment to contact your state Assembly and Senate representatives, as well as OPWDD, and urge them to revisit their COVID-19 restrictions and allow your families the same access and normalcy that is provided to all New Yorkers.

On Friday, we received word that OPWDD released new guidance, see attached. This new guidance states that:

- 1) Fully vaccinated staff members are no longer required to wear masks while working in our homes or day programs;
- 2) Unrestricted visitation and community outings are again allowed. **ALL visitors who are NOT fully vaccinated must remain masked and maintain social distance.**
- 3) Masking is still required by both staff and individuals (vaccinated or not) while being transported between OPWDD certified locations (e.g. from a residence to a day program).
- 4) Capacity limitations for our programs has been lifted. Therefore, the only limitation to our supportive services is the staffing crisis we are currently facing.

How can you help? Continue your advocacy efforts by contacting the Governor's office and OPWDD and urge them to provide funding for increased wages for Direct Support Professionals.

Additionally, while we continue to market, advertise, and search for new and innovative approaches to locating potential superhero staff members, we can always use a helping hand. So, if you know of a caring person who might be a wonderful addition to the Living Resources team, please send them our way! The application process can be accessed on our website at www.livingresources.org or your contact could reach out directly to Lisa Razanousky, HR Department at lisa.razanousky@livingresources.org.

We will continue to keep you updated as new guidance is released. As always, should you have any questions, please reach out to me at emartin@livingresources.org or 518-218-0000 x 5530.

Best regards for your health and safety,

Elizabeth Martin
Chief Executive Officer



July 2, 2021

Post State of Emergency COVID-19 Guidance for OPWDD Certified, Operated, and/or Funded Facilities and Programs

Background:

On May 19, 2021, consistent with the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New York State (NYS) aligned the mandates for mask wearing and social distancing to eliminate requirements for most vaccinated individuals.

On June 25, 2021, the State of Emergency declared by Governor Andrew Cuomo, to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, was allowed to expire. All associated Executive Orders and most COVID-19 restrictions will also be lifted throughout the State.

Post-Emergency Guidance:

Providers of OPWDD certified, operated, and/or funded programs should resume all pre-pandemic activities in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations, which still may include any applicable COVID-19 rules, regulations, or [guidance](#) issued by OPWDD. Effective June 25, 2021, providers may operate programs at full capacity to extent possible, to resume unrestricted visitation at and community outings from residential facilities, and to remove capacity limitations during transportation if all individuals are vaccinated.

Providers who had been acting under Executive Order provisions related to background checks should immediately begin implementing pre-COVID background checks, consistent with *Expiration of Interim Guidance Regarding the Criminal Background Check Process*, issued June 24, 2021. Providers who have been utilizing abbreviated trainings, pursuant to Executive order flexibilities, should immediately resume all mandatory trainings requirements, consistent with *OPWDD Updated Guidance Regarding Abbreviated/Refresher Training and Recertifications*, updated on June 24, 2021.

Ongoing COVID-19 Precautions:

Consistent with CDC guidance, fully [vaccinated](#) people are no longer required to wear masks or maintain social distance in most places within NYS, including within OPWDD certified, operated and/or funded facilities and programs. However, individuals and staff will be required to wear masks, to the extent they can medically tolerate one, regardless of vaccination status, while being

transported between OPWDD certified locations or transported as part of an OPWDD certified service (e.g. from a residence to a day program).

Per CDC guidance, individuals and staff who are unvaccinated are expected to continue to wear masks, if they can medically tolerate one, and maintain social distance to the extent possible at certified locations and/or when delivering or receiving certified services. Unvaccinated visitors to such locations must continue to wear masks and maintain social distance to the extent possible for the duration of the visit.

All high touch surfaces should continue to be cleaned and disinfected consistent with CDC guidelines. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

Residential facilities with positive cases of COVID-19 should continue to adhere to the protocols contained in the document *Management of Co-Circulation of Influenza and COVID-19 Infections*, issued October 20, 2020.

Reporting Requirements:

OPWDD will continue to track positive cases of COVID-19 within its programs to monitor for trends and inform the need for any additional precautionary restrictions. As such, providers must continue to report positive COVID-19 cases to OPWDD, consistent with *COVID-19 Notification and IRMA Reporting Requirements for OPWDD Providers*, last issued on November 2, 2020.

All providers must continue to report vaccination status of individuals and staff via the Multi-Agency Vaccination Data Collection System.