



HEALTH ALERT

Gregory Cherpes, MD
ODP Medical Director



March 2, 2020

The Department of Human Services' (DHS) Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is working closely with the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) to ensure preparations for a response to a **possible Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak** in the State. DOH is the lead agency for the commonwealth's response to COVID-19. At the time of this dissemination, Pennsylvania has zero confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The Department has received a number of requests for guidance related to COVID-19. With an abundance of caution and to give direction to those with concerns about COVID-19, we have gathered some established contact routes and information from DOH:

- Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCF) (Source: CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>
- If you have questions specifically regarding COVID-19 in relation to health care settings DOH has provided resources here: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus%20Resources.aspx>.
- Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Source: CDC): https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fguidance-business-response.html.
- For information on what to do if you are sick, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/sick-with-2019-nCoV-fact-sheet.pdf>
- For questions about ODP regulatory compliance related to COVID-19, providers can submit inquiries to the licensing resource account at the following address ra-odplicensing@pa.gov. Otherwise, please visit the DOH site <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>, which has several downloadable documents that can be used for information dissemination, or call 1-877-PA-HEALTH.
- The Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre of the Philadelphia region released an update on the COVID-19 for individuals with deaf and hard of hearing needs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V922kV3q5zA&feature=youtu.be>.

Again, DHS is supporting DOH in the disseminating information related to COVID-19 and all guidance is provided by, and should be sought through, DOH.

All ODP providers are encouraged to:

- 1) Review internal infection control protocols and emergency backup plans for events in which a provider does not have adequate staffing to meet individual's health and safety needs.
- 2) Evaluate staff adherence to provider infection control protocols.
- 3) Evaluate capacity to implement emergency backup plans in the event staffing is impacted by the COVID-19 virus.

While COVID-19 is raising international concern, it presents an opportunity to evaluate preventative infection control measures. Medically fragile individuals, those in congregate settings, and the staff that support/interact with them are all at increased risk for infections of all kinds, not just COVID-19. As always, the best response is prevention and the best prevention is good infection control.