

## Frequently Asked Questions for Families, Guardians, and Residents of Developmental Centers

### **How will the developmental center keep my friend or family member safe?**

The Department of Human Services' Division of Developmental Disabilities' (Division) first priority is the health and safety of the individuals it serves and the critical staff that support them. The residents of the five developmental centers (centers) the Division operates are no exception. As a result, the Division instituted protocols earlier this year designed to ensure continued operations of each center and protect residents and staff from potential exposure to illnesses, including COVID-19.

These protocols are based on best practices recommended by various U.S. public health authorities including the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the New Jersey Department of Health.

Actions the Division has taken at all centers include, but are not limited to:

- The establishment of a COVID-19 Committee at each center to both manage all aspects of the COVID-19 response and to support the broader work of existing Infection Control Committees;
- Re-education of all residents and staff on hand hygiene, including hand hygiene after contact with respiratory secretions, with regular reinforcement;
- Re-education of all staff on cleaning and disinfection procedures, with regular reinforcement;
- Enhanced and more frequent cleaning of highly trafficked areas and surfaces;
- Re-enforcement of universal precautions and social distancing, to the extent practical based on person-centered needs;
- Adjustment of staffing patterns to ensure critical services are provided while reducing the number of individuals that pass through common or shared areas;
- Review of food, medication and medical supply levels;
- Implementation of staff temperature and symptom monitoring before every shift;
- Additional monitoring and observation of signs and symptoms of respiratory illnesses for center residents; and
- Implementation of visitor restrictions and screening protocols for all individuals entering the centers.

**How will the above restrictions impact the care my friend or family member receives?**

Residents, as always, will continue to receive proper medical care. Essential programming will continue with some modifications, including needed therapies, day activities and IHP meetings.

All team meetings will be conducted remotely or in accordance with social distancing guidelines. You will be contacted by the center if there are any changes to a meeting scheduled for your friend or family member.

**Can I visit my friend or family member at the center?**

To protect center residents and staff from exposure to COVID-19, all visits to center residents are suspended unless deemed critical by the center's Chief Executive Officer. This is in-line with guidance released by the CDC for long-term care facilities, found here: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html).

**If visits to the center are suspended, how can I communicate with my friend or family member who resides there?**

The Division recognizes that communication between residents and their friends and family are important. To ensure that this can occur, alternative means of communication such as phone and video communication (e.g., Skype) are available at each location. For more information, please call the number for your center listed on page 4 of this document and ask for the Social Services Department.

**What can the friends and families of center residents do to help?**

The Division, center residents and staff are greatly appreciative of the offers of support from friends and family. At this time, the best way to provide assistance is to comply with the no visitation policy and let the residents and staff know you support them through letters, phone calls and other forms of remote communication. Sending food and care packages is discouraged as centers are not introducing non-essential items to center living areas (Cottages, etc.) due to the possibility of item exposure to COVID-19.

**How have the centers adjusted their everyday operations to ensure that resident and staff are as safe as possible?**

Each center has adjusted staffing levels and patterns to ensure that only staff essential to the care of residents enter residential living areas. Additionally, staff in each center's administrative offices have been moved to remote work and rotational schedules wherever possible to minimize the number of staff on site at any one time. Non-essential projects that would have required contractors or other external workers to come on site have also been postponed.

**Are residents, staff and essential visitors screened?**

Yes. Residents at each center are constantly monitored for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, as well as other respiratory illnesses. If a resident displays symptoms, proper medical care will be provided and you will be notified.

All staff have been directed to stay home if they are experiencing signs or symptoms of COVID-19. At the start of each shift, each staff person is screened before entering resident areas. That screening consists of asking the staff person the following questions:

- Have you had a temperature of over 99.9 degrees within the last 24 hours?
  - The staff's temperature is taken at the time of screening to verify this and recorded.
- Have you had cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?
- Have you or someone you live with had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?
- Within the past 14 days, have you traveled to an area subject to a Level 3 CDC Travel Health Notice?

If a staff person answers *Yes* to any of the above screening questions they are not permitted to work. In the rare instance that a visitor would be permitted on campus, they would undergo the same above screening.

### **Are there any changes to how residents at the centers interact with one another?**

Yes. Due to the potential of community spread of COVID-19, all resident programming is generally occurring in residential living areas (Cottages, etc.). When activities outside of the residential living areas do occur, it is limited to residents that live together. Interaction between residents in different living areas is not occurring. Additionally, communal dining and group activities have been suspended or modified while ensuring that an individual's person-centered needs continue to be met.

### **How are residents kept engaged?**

Staff at each center are working constantly to support the needs of residents and to keep them active and engaged each day. Activities provided are based on the unique needs and interests of the resident using a person-centered approach.

### **Will social distancing be used at the center?**

Both staff and residents have been directed to practice social distancing to the extent practical. In circumstances where social distancing cannot be achieved, all possible precautions are taken to minimize risk of illness.

### **Is there enough food, medication, and cleaning supplies at the center?**

Yes. There is a sufficient supply of food, medication, and cleaning supplies at each center. Contingency planning has taken place to address the possibility of future supply chain issues.

### **What happens if my friend or family member is exposed to COVID-19 or becomes ill?**

If your friend or family member is exposed to COVID-19, the center will work with the local health department and ensure that proper reporting requirements are followed. The resident's guardian will be notified. If isolation is required, each center has prepared isolation space to ensure the safety of other residents and staff. Each center is also prepared to care for your friend or family member and will follow physician recommendations related to the care provision.

**Can I to take my friend or family member home for an extended period of time related to COVID-19?  
If I do will they be able to return to the Center?**

Yes. You can choose to take your friend or family member home for an extended period of time due to COVID-19. However, please understand that their immediate return may be impacted as the center needs to ensure the health and safety of all residents and staff. A screening protocol similar to what is used for staff would be required before they would be permitted to resident areas. If there is a suspicion that they may be infected, isolation strategies will be put in place based on the resources available at that time. In any case, their long term placement at the center will not be in jeopardy based on an extended family visit related to COVID-19.

**If I have questions about my friend or family member, who should I contact?**

If you have questions related to your friend or family member, you can contact the center at any time. The center's Social Services Department is available to address questions specific about your friend or family member.

**What is the contact information for the center where my friend or family member resides?**

**Green Brook Regional Center**

275 Green Brook Road  
Green Brook, New Jersey 08812  
Phone: (732) 968-6000  
Chief Executive Officer:  
[Tony.Brindisi@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:Tony.Brindisi@dhs.nj.gov)

**Vineland Developmental Center**

P.O. Box 1513  
1676 East Landis Avenue  
Vineland, New Jersey 08362  
Phone: (856) 696-6000  
Chief Executive Officer:  
[Sheila.Hoffler@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:Sheila.Hoffler@dhs.nj.gov)

**Hunterdon Developmental Center**

P.O. Box 4003  
40 Pittstown Road  
Clinton, New Jersey 08809-4003  
Phone: (908) 735-4031  
Chief Executive Officer:  
[Elisabeth.Hutchins@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:Elisabeth.Hutchins@dhs.nj.gov)

**Woodbine Developmental Center**

1175 Dehirsch Avenue  
Woodbine, New Jersey 08270  
Phone: (609) 861-2164  
Chief Executive Officer:  
[Michael.Kelly@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:Michael.Kelly@dhs.nj.gov)

**New Lisbon Developmental Center**

P.O. Box 130  
Route 72  
New Lisbon, New Jersey 08064  
Phone: (609) 726-1000  
Chief Executive Officer:  
[David.Thomas@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:David.Thomas@dhs.nj.gov)