

June 04, 2020

To: All Assisted Living Homes

From: Senior Leadership Team

ASSISTED LIVING HOMES (including Family Habilitation and Foster Care homes)

We thank you for keeping Alaska among the top States in the USA for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Your hard work and care is paying off, but continued vigilance is needed as we see a spike in cases this week that may have been passed around a few weeks ago in earlier opening phases.

Hope's Policy for Assisted Living Homes includes guidance and mandates from the Federal Center for Disease Control, the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services mandates, the State of Alaska Public Health Department, Senior and Disabilities Services, the Department of Licensing, and the Municipality of Anchorage Emergency Orders.

NEW INFORMATION!

Effective May 22, 2020 Governor Dunleavy has opened Alaska for business.

Dr. Anne Zink has stated "Open does not mean over", and the following expectations remain in place.



Alaska's Plan Forward



Alaska has done an excellent job of managing COVID-19. We responded quickly to an unknown threat to keep our cases low and to ensure our healthcare systems have the increased capacity to deal with COVID-19 cases in the future. The base actions that led to our success will continue to be our playbook for the future:

- Stay six feet or more away from non-family members.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Wipe down surfaces frequently.
- Wear a face covering when in a public setting in close contact with others.
- Stay home if you are sick and get tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms.
- Be mindful and respectful to those Alaskans that are most vulnerable to this virus. Those being our seniors and those with existing health issues.

Senior and Disabilities Services maintains the COVID-19 Guidance for Long Term Care, Residential and Assisted Living Facilities issued March 23, 2020 by the State of Alaska Public Health Department Epidemiology.

The components of Hope's policy already in place, based on this planning guidance includes:

- A. Hope Health line to answer questions and assist staff**
- B. Actively watching for changes in symptoms of recipients daily**
- C. Screen all staff at the beginning of their shift (with the Daily Screening Form)**
- D. Restrict all visitors, except essential visitors such as medical providers or home repair. Communicate with all visitors why restrictions are in place and how important it is to protect residents. (This sets the current expectation that NO VISITORS are allowed into Assisted Living Homes, including guardians and parents).**
- E. Cancel all group activities, except within the same household**

May 29, 2020

SDS E-Alert: Health Alerts Remain in Effect and COVID Webpage Updates

SDS reminds providers and consumers that, even though Alaska is allowing most businesses to re-open, all senior centers and institutions will continue to have restricted access. Health Alerts remain in effect, including Health Alert 7, which suspended services in congregate settings.

Health Alert 7 states: *The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) has suspended, statewide, all long-term services and supports that occur in congregate settings, including senior centers, adult day services, and any site-based day habilitation or supported employment activities where individuals gather together. DHSS is working with federal partners to determine if services may be offered in a more flexible manner within home settings.*

http://dhss.alaska.gov/News/Documents/press/2020/SOA_03172020_HealthAlert007_CongregateSettings.pdf

SDS has posted on its [COVID webpage](#) the following links to COVID-19 guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This guidance primarily focuses on the needs of family members and caregivers who support people with developmental disabilities.

- [Guidance for Direct Service Providers](#)
- [Guidance for Group Homes for Individuals with Disabilities](#)
- [Guidance for Direct Service Providers, Caregivers, Parents, and People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders](#)
- [People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders](#)

Here is a link to the CDC website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/developmental-behavioral-disorders.html>.

SDS will let providers and consumers know via E-Alert when the guidance on the re-opening of services provided in congregate settings is updated.

Hope's Senior Leadership Team continues to require all employees or authorized visitors reporting to work at an assisted living home to complete the Daily Screening Form indicating that they are healthy enough to start working EACH DAY BEFORE entering the home, and to sign the visitors log at the home.

BALANCING PERSON-CENTERED LIVES while REOPENING RESPONSIBLY

Many of the current restrictions emphasize Hope's value of safety and security. To bring other values of relationship, joy, choice, opportunity, individuality and dignity into focus, Hope is utilizing an existing structure of support team meetings to assess and implement risk/benefit discussions. With the intent of responsibly accessing meaningful life opportunities as Alaska re-opens and experiences the effect of increased cases, this approach maintains Hope's approach of "the language of Yes" and avoids a "one size fits all" restriction level.

We understand that many residents in assisted living homes are struggling with the inability to see their parent/guardian/family members in person. While visits inside the Assisted Living Home are NOT permitted, with weather improving outdoor meet-ups are more possible.

NEW For guardians or family member lives out of state, please assure they know that each home has a tablet and ZOOM capability so continue to use phone or zoom meetings to maintain visual connection.

For guardians or family members who live in-state, use the support team planning process with some additional discussion tools to develop an individualized approach and also addresses risks to other residents. These include:

- The AADD COVID-19 emergence for SDS matrix to understand a variety of factors in considering safety/restriction levels
- The AADD Reopening Risk Benefit Discussion Guide May 2020 to assess what risk level and additional safeguards might be needed based on situational, age, health and residential factors
- The AADD Risk Level descriptions for Community Settings and possible additional safeguards to consider for lowering risk
- The Support Planning Team Notes document to record the discussion regarding the individual, and including the Care Coordinator for potential Appendix K amendment need
- A Home Alliance Team record to assure that other residents and guardians are in alignment

Here are some general guidelines for out-of-the home meetings:

1. Choose a place like a park where 6 foot social distancing can be maintained from the guardian or family member and other space users. Look for a park with a covered area, in case it rains. Or, a walk around the neighborhood can be planned.
2. Each family member should be asked the same screening questions as employees or essential visitors before the meeting begins, and be willing to wear a face covering.
3. The staff and recipient will also wear face covering and gloves before leaving the home, and wash their hands immediately upon returning. Staff will provide transportation if necessary and remain present.
4. Hugs, eating meals together and physical contact are to be avoided at this time. "Share" a meal through a Zoom or other Facetime method. If full social distancing can be maintained, a short "mask break" to have a drink or eat an ice cream is acceptable, and the family member could have a similar "mask break" to create a sense of sharing a treat.
5. If planned outdoor option is not possible due to weather or other climate conditions, Hope may assist in designating a visiting area indoors that can be properly sanitized between visits. More

information will follow. Visits with family or guardians at indoor restaurants and other business locations are not permitted at this time.

More information and guidance, as well as opportunities for question and answer sessions will come from the Program Leadership Team in applying this process to individual situations.

REMEMBER!

COMMUNITY- BASED ACTIVITIES: MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS, GROCERY SHOPPING, RESTAURANTS and TRANSPORTATION

Activities for recipients outside the home are encouraged for getting fresh air and exercise with face coverings and where social distancing of at least six feet from other people in public can be maintained!

Medical Appointments: As more “non-essential procedures” and services are becoming available, contact the provider to learn what their personal protective procedures are and whether accompanying staff are allowed into the appointment. Ask the provider if not doing the procedure or keeping an appointment would more harmful than the risk of COVID exposure. Ask if the procedure requires a COVID test to be completed beforehand. Make a plan for keeping the appointment and send it into the Hope Health Line at least 72 hours before the appointment for approval or plan adjustment.



Grocery Shopping, and other Stores

As business begin to reopen, our risk of exposure INCREASES as other community members are not always responsible in observing social distancing and face coverings.

For essential grocery or other supplies, schedule one day a week for shopping and plan ahead. Only ONE staff from the home should use the pick up or home delivery service. Staff must wear gloves, face mask or other protective equipment available. Gloves should be disposed of immediately upon leaving the store in a trash bin or bag. If none of these options are available, contact your supervisor so we can arrange delivery of essential supplies. Pay attention to the instructional videos on Hope News that demonstrate proper use of protective equipment, and decontamination of goods purchased. Hope has received more supplies of masks and gloves.

TAKING RECIPIENTS FROM ASSISTED LIVING HOMES INTO GROCERY, RESTAURANTS AND OTHER STORES HAS A HIGH RISK OF EXPOSURE TO OTHER RESIDENTS AND STAFF!



Lack of access to personal care services like hairdressing salons, and other services that normalize life, like a phone replacement may be increasingly challenging for our recipients! If there is a pressing need to access these services, make a support plan and contact the Hope Health Line for approval.

Disciplinary Action will result if this is not followed.

Transportation for Community Activities, including Day Habilitation

Transportation usually reduces social distancing, so extra care must be taken before transporting recipients in Hope vehicles with staff who are not living with the recipient. The State of Alaska has also authorized many of these services to be delivered remotely or in the person's residence.

We encourage recipients to get out and receive fresh air and a change of scenery but before transporting, ask the following questions:

1. Can the service be provided in the home or neighborhood while maintaining social distance from others?
2. Is driving essential to providing the service?
3. If so, do you have the necessary PPE including face masks and gloves for yourself and the recipient?
4. Do you have supplies to disinfect the vehicle after returning from the outing?
5. Does the transportation meet a Day Habilitation goal in the person's Plan of Care?



We are very aware that people are anxious to return to previous levels of physical access to community and family connections, yet we are realizing that while cases in Alaska continue to increase, these measures will probably be our “new normal” for several months. **The effect of re-opening the community in phases cannot be measured or understood until 3-4 weeks after each phase.**

Until you hear otherwise from the Senior Leadership Team, we need you to keep our current practices in place. Always remember that we appreciate you and we are proud of you and the work you are doing!

Thank you everyone!