

NOTICE: All provider agencies that receive this publication are **REQUIRED** to distribute this update in a timely manner to **ALL** therapy practitioners and/or case managers contracted or employed by your agency. Thank you so much for all you do!

COVID-19 and Therapy Services Information

I wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for your hard work, creativity, persistence and candor during these rough times. As of this writing, 13 persons in DDS Wavier services have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and 4 people have passed away. Many provider staff and their families have also fallen ill. I certainly know that some days are *just harder* than others so if you ever need me or any of the CSB team, please reach out. We are here for you.

“Are we there yet?” As many sectors of New Mexico are re-opening, DDS has started an internal work group to begin to address the many issues that our system will face. Formal outreach to all provider groups will occur soon and input from Therapists and the Therapy Network is certainly needed and wanted. Although we are not “there yet”, stay tuned for more information and begin to gather your ideas or concerns to share.

- PLEASE DISTRIBUTE THIS TO ALL CLINICIANS ASAP! We will address some of the most FAQs from therapists and agencies related to COVID-19 and Therapy Services in these issues.
- Please note - **this is a very fluid situation and directives can change rapidly.** This *Therapist Updates* is current as of the time of release, but therapists and readers should follow the latest guidance available as circumstances do change rapidly.

FAQs Related to Therapy Services Provision during the COVID-19 Crisis

- **Q: “I am having a difficult time trying to determine the best way to work with individuals who are non-verbal and have a very limited attention span. Many cannot attend or follow basic requests when I am utilizing Telehealth and can’t physically cue them.”**
 - It can be very difficult to work with some individuals using telehealth. Some folks just do not attend to an I-Pad or laptop screen and don’t relate your image and voice to you. Often therapists may need to emphasize observing individuals and DSP completing WDSIs. Therapists may also ask DSP to trial various strategies since the therapist can’t perform those trials in person. Then the therapist can observe how the individual reacts to a strategy or a sensory input. Monitoring and training may be accomplished even if the individual is not able to attend to the therapist with traditional Telehealth options.
 - Some individuals may react better to a larger image of the therapist during Telehealth. Casting to a larger TV screen may be a great way to enhance training for larger groups as well. You may be tech savvy enough to cast your screen from an iPad or laptop to a TV Screen. Per a Google Search – “If you’ve got a Windows 10-based **laptop** and a compatible **TV**, one of the easiest ways to transmit **your laptop screen** to your **TV** is to use the new **screen-casting** capabilities that are built into the Windows 10 interface. Just go to the Action Center and click Connect.”

1 | “Therapist Updates” will be sent via e-mail to DD Waiver Therapy and CM Providers on a periodic basis from the CSB or DDS. **Please distribute to all providers in your agency in a timely manner!** Thank you!

You may need to explore various options for this depending on the agency technology options and train staff on “how to” via Telehealth. Therapists can also order equipment through the Appendix K modification for the AT Fund to allow for this to happen more easily.

- **Q: “I have requested an I-Pad for the individual I work with through the Budget-Based AT Fund but it seems like it is taking a long time to receive the AT requested. How can we speed up this process?”**
 - DDSD has worked with HSD to clarify the process with the third-party assessor for these requests. Be sure to follow the information provided in the “AT Fund Guide” published 4.8.2020 may be accessed here <https://www.nmhealth.org/publication/view/guide/5870/>. You can work with the Case Manager to determine the status of the submission and can always file a RORA for Regional or CSB assistance as needed.
- **Q: “Many of the homes I work with do have laptops or iPads available that can be used for telehealth but the Agency does not want to give staff the Password to the Wi-Fi so we aren’t able to provide services via telehealth. What can we do?”**
 - DDSD has been in touch with various agencies related to Wi-Fi provision for Telehealth. Most agencies are willing to work with the therapist to provide the password if there is an agency password but may have certain safeguards in place. Work with the agency directly to problem solve around Wi-Fi access when needed.
 - Some agencies have hard-wired internet access and no ability to have Wi-Fi available, as well. When this is the case, work with the agency representatives and teams to get low-cost internet access/Wi-Fi available to the individuals in the house. The IDT can meet again to problem solve these issues.

Please contact the CSB to report ongoing issues with Wi-Fi access for therapy telehealth sessions. You may be asked to submit a RORA but please call one of us for help at anytime.

- **Q: “What are some additional ways that therapists can provide needed supports to individuals who are now spending much more time at home and whose schedules have been upended during this healthcare crisis?” (Note: We covered a variety of additional suggestions in previous *Therapist Updates*.)**
 - The Resources section below has information for the IDD and CoVid Toolkit that has some great resources related to many types of COVID-related, needed therapy interventions!
 - We have heard from some OTs who are creating WDSIs, AT, and various cueing strategies to work with individuals and staff via telehealth on washing hands and specific cleaning skills to assist people to be as safe and independent as possible during this CoVid 19 Healthcare Crisis and beyond.
 - One OT worked with a client who was interested to make very simple masks for themselves and to give away. She was able to send some basic materials and

instructions through the mail and then demonstrate with staff and the individual via telehealth. What an awesome idea!

- Therapists might also create social stories or information to help individuals understand why people might be wearing masks and to help them decrease anxiety and confusion around people looking so different than they are used to.
- Some PT's have used on-line services such as You Tube videos to encourage movement (chair workouts, walking and moving). Others have set up scavenger hunts, either in the community if someone has that ability or within the home, to encourage mobility.
- There are several SLPs who are using this time to program their client's Voice Output Communication Devices (VOCAs). Many of our clients are at home communicating with familiar listeners, so it may be an opportune time to take the VOCA for an extended time period. This is not true for all individuals and should be discussed with the client. Remember to think about how the client will communicate while you have their device. If there is not already a low-tech system in place, this is a great time to begin developing one.

Thanks for the Memories! From Julie Mehrl, MOTR/L, OT Consultant for the CSB (thru June!)

- It is so hard to believe that I have worked with individuals in NM with IDD for almost 30 years! I started working as an OT at the Los Lunas Hospital and Training School (LLHTS) in 1990 and have worked as an OT Supervisor at LLHTS and then as the OT Consultant for DDS Clinical Service Bureau ever since. Before that time, I worked at the VA, in APS, in hospital acute care, and in long-term care. I also worked as an Art and Music Activity Specialist with IDD adults before becoming an OT. I remember watching the OT as I was conducting a sing-along with a group of clients and thinking that I needed to find out more about this Occupational Therapy as it seemed right up my alley. I am so very glad that I did!

From walking cottage to cottage at the LLHTS with all the therapists wearing goggles as protection from the blowing sand in the spring; to all of the crazy CSB trips hauling AT around the state for trainings; to all those "gap services" adventures from Clovis to Gallup to Pie Town; to developing a variety of resources for OTs that I still get questions about and thank you's for from around the state and beyond... I have so many rewarding memories!

Most prevalent among these is the great privilege I had for so many years to work with Fran Dorman, PT and Lourie Pohl, SLP as my fellow CSB therapy consultants. I learned so much from both of them as experts in the field and admire them both so very much. I will be forever grateful to have worked and laughed with them as friends and learned colleagues. I am also very grateful to have worked with amazing individuals with IDD as well as the many OTs, therapists, IDTs and last (but not least) the many dedicated/amazing staff that have made such a difference for so many!

As I retire from this position, I hope to keep working with a small caseload of folks in the DD Waiver. You are in great hands with Mary Beth and Demarre. It has been a pleasure working with them and the Clinical Services Bureau! Please continue to advocate for AT, Environmental Mods, Sensory Supports and all those creative OT strategies that make such a difference for so many. You really do

matter! You are so appreciated! I can't thank you enough for all the great memories. See ya out there...

Resource Information (please check previous *Therapist Updates* for additional resources especially related to various Telehealth platforms and HIPAA news)

- The DDS COVID-19 site at <https://nmhealth.org/about/ddsd/diro/ddcv/> consolidates information especially relevant to DDS providers including: all DDS COVID-19 Numbered Response Memos; Guidance Documents; Policies; and a variety of very helpful Resource Documents. Please check this site often for updates!
- **Bridging Apps** is a fantastic resource from Easter Seals of Greater Houston for finding a variety of apps that can help the individuals you work with be safer, healthier as well as more functional in their daily lives. Their goal "is to provide caregivers and professionals with the best resources for choosing apps to enhance everyday life for people with disabilities and sharing their successes with others." Check out this great resource at - <https://www.bridgingapps.org/>
- The **Healthcare for Adults with IDD** website <https://iddtoolkit.vkcsites.org/> has a great section with **CoVid 19 and IDD Resources**. Click on the Corona Virus Resources link that is in red at the top of the page to find a variety of social stories, healthcare rights information, adapted safety instructions, how to stay safe resources, how to advocate for individuals with IDD who are hospitalized, etc. Don't miss these helpful resources!
- **Comcast Internet Essentials Program**. Low cost internet \$9.95/mo. If the individual is eligible for Medicaid, SSI, SNAP, etc. they are eligible for this program. Comcast also has gently refurbished computers available for approx. \$200 for individuals that qualify for Comcast Essentials! For more information and to apply: <https://internetessentials.com/>
NOTE: If you want to apply for Internet Essentials over the phone please call 1-855-8-INTERNET (1-855-846-8376).
- **Verizon Jetpack or other Wi-Fi connection devices** associated with Cell Phone plans may be an option for telehealth access. Unlike the built-in mobile hotspot feature in your smartphones and tablets, a Jetpack is a separate device that lets you wirelessly share your Verizon network connection with other devices.

You can connect other devices (e.g., tablets, smartphones, notebooks, netbooks, cameras, gaming devices) to your Jetpack through each device's Wi-Fi feature. While the devices are connected, you're charged per your monthly data plan for the data that's used.

For more info for Verizon try <https://www.verizon.com/internet-devices/> Other cell phone companies have other options that can be researched and considered.

Misc. Notices

- Referrals to the *Specialty Seating Clinic* for wheelchair, positioning, and adaptive equipment can continue to be made. We are working on a procedure to return to in-person fitting of custom-molded seating systems, starting with individuals whose systems were suspended due to the restrictions put in place for the PHE. We are also working on scheduling remote-technology evaluations for those whose appointments were postponed. Contact Jason Lavy,

Specialty Seating Clinic Manager, via Therap, at (505) 222-4610 or at specialty.seating@state.nm.us for more information.

- Any adult with I/DD who is experiencing challenges related to oral eating and/or tube feeding can be referred to the *SAFE Clinic* for expert assessment and recommendations regarding eating/feeding, nutrition, positioning, and associated medical needs to support health, safety and independence. SAFE Clinic appointments will be delayed until further notice unless critical health exceptions are approved. Call Jacoba (Kotie) Viljoen PhD, MSN-Ed, RN, CCRN, CSB ARM Coordinator, SAFE Clinic Coordinator for further information. Office Phone: (505) 841-6188 / Fax# (505) 841-2987 or Email: Jacoba.Viljoen@state.nm.us
- Please remember that CARMPs will need to be entered through Therap very soon. If you have not attended the training sessions related to CARMP and Therap, please contact Jacoba.Viljoen@state.nm.us for information and resources to enter your CARMP information in Therap.
- Important Dates related to DD Waiver renewal
 - DD Waiver: Rate Increase Amendment
 - July 1 HSD to submit Waiver Amendment to CMS
 - October 1 Pending CMS approval- rates due to be implemented
- The DDS Targeted Rate Study for OT, PT and SLP will be wrapping up this month. Many thanks to those provider agencies who participated by providing critically needed information to PCG in order to help set rates for therapy services in the future.

CSB Training Opportunities

Navigating Therap: Training for Therapist, RDs, and BSCs

May 29, 2020 @ 11:00 – 12:00pm

Clinical Services has partnered with BSC staff, and Kathy Baker to offer a training about navigating Therap. This training is designed to show therapists, RDs, and BSCs, how to navigate Therap and information that they can access. Training will be conducted via Skype and has limited capacity. Additional trainings will be scheduled as needed. For any questions about his training please contact Jacoba “Kotie” Viljoen at Jacoba.Viljoen@state.nm.us or 505-841-6188.

UPCOMING PA/STANDARDS and ARM TRAINING

ALL ON-SITE TRAININGS ARE POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!

ONLINE TRAININGS ARE AVAILABLE!

Training	Time	Date
<i>Participatory Approach/Standards</i>	9:00 – 12:00 / 12:30 – 4:00	7/16/20
<i>Aspiration Risk Management</i>	9:00 – 12:00 / 12:30 – 4:00	7/17/20

Instructions: You must pre-register for on-line trainings at the following website - <https://ddsdtrain.cdd.unm.edu/Calendar.aspx>
 Please note that dates may be cancelled due to low registration or dates may be modified. If this happens you will be notified. News date will be reflected on the website above.

Annual Mobility and Assistive Technology Conference

Due to the current PHE and the uncertainty of what the future will bring, we are sad to announce that we have decided to cancel the 2020 Mobility and Assistive Technology Conference. We are hoping to provide you with some virtual educational events in the Fall, so stay tuned!

CSB Contact Information

CSB Bureau Chief: Elizabeth Finley, Elizabeth.Finley@state.nm.us

CSB AT/Therapy Coordinator: Felicia Vidro, Felicia.Vidro@state.nm.us

CSB ARM Coordinator: Jacoba (Kotie) Viljoen, Jacoba.Viljoen@state.nm.us

Contacts for the clinical consultant representing your discipline:

- Julie Mehrl, Occupational Therapy Julie.Mehrl@state.nm.us
505-975-5024 (cell) e-mail preferred. Text or call for urgent needs is OK.
- Mary Beth Schubauer, Physical Therapy MaryBeth.Schubauer@state.nm.us
505-238-2247 (cell) Text or call is OK
- Demarre Sanchez, Speech Therapy Demarre.Sanchez@state.nm.us
505-417-5264 (cell) Text or call is OK

Kudos and Thank you!

Thanks to so many of you who, despite all the challenges, have gone above and beyond to creatively support the individuals and teams you work with during this extraordinary healthcare emergency! We appreciate you!