

COVID-19 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

Community Living disABILITY Services

This is a challenging time for participants and families. COVID-19 has caused all of us to make changes to the way we live and how we stay connected with each other. Decisions about how services are delivered are made under the guidance of Public Health to increase public safety and reduce exposure to the virus.

The Community Living disABILITY Services (CLDS) program wants to make sure you have the latest information about the services that will continue to be available during this time. We appreciate your patience as we develop solutions to ensure the safe delivery of services.

Staying in Touch with Your Community Service Worker

To help stop the spread of the virus, many community service workers (CSWs) and program managers are working from home. Participants and their families can continue to contact their CSWs via telephone and email to plan for services.

Although CSWs will not be attending in-person meetings with participants and families until further notice, you can still connect with your CSW by phone or email. CSWs have access to email and are returning messages throughout the day. In most cases, CSWs will respond to questions within one business day.

CSWs are also available to meet by GoToMeeting. GoToMeeting is a video conferencing tool that allows you to see the person on screen. Participants and their families can reach out to their CSW if they would like to schedule a video conference call. Staff will ensure that interpreters are available for participants, if required.

If there is an urgent COVID-19 related situation that requires an immediate response, participants or their families can contact the CLDS call centre toll-free phone line at 1-844-730-0105, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed on statutory holidays). After-hours emergency support may be available for a crisis that cannot wait until regular business hours by calling 204-945-0183 (Winnipeg), 1-866-559-6778 (toll-free) or 1-800-855-0511 (TTY).

Changes to Day Services

CLDS made the decision to suspend non-critical day services in order to move CLDS participants away from settings that could not allow for safe social distancing.

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Day services continue to be available to CLDS participants who have a critical need for the service. An individual is assessed as having a critical need if:

- a family member might lose their job if the day service is not provided;
- a home share provider cannot provide care during the day; or
- the individual cannot be safely supported at their home during the day.

Participants who have a critical need will continue to be supported at the same day services location by the same agency. Participants who do not have a critical need will be supported in their home.

It is difficult to know when day services will be available to everyone again. The department will continue to work with provincial public health officials to determine when it is safe for participants to go back.

Changes to Transportation Services

If you have a critical need for day services, CLDS wants to make sure you can get to your day service location. The program is continuing to support transportation for individuals in critical need of day services.

Individuals can also continue getting bus passes in order to run errands and attend appointments, such as going to the doctor or the dentist.

Changes to Supports to People Living at Home with Family

Staying home and spending less time in the community will help to slow the spread of the coronavirus. CLDS has made some changes to the services provided to participants living with families in order to help them stay home.

In-home respite and in-home services are being provided to individuals with a critical need. Out-of-home respite is not available at this time.

Participants and families will be assessed as having a critical need for in-home supports if:

- their health or safety might be at risk;
- they might lose their job; or
- they might lose their residential placement.

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CSWs will work with you to determine if you have a critical need for in-home supports. If you do, the CSW and resource coordinator will determine the best way the service can be delivered (i.e., phone, video call, family support, etc.) to limit the amount of in-person contact.

In-home supports can be provided by direct support providers, agency staff and self-administered staff.

Increasing Staffing Supports to Residential Services

CLDS continues to support participants in their homes including family homes, independent living suites, home shares and shift-staffed homes. Day services staff are available to provide support to participants who are no longer going to their day service and need support at home during the day.

Limiting Visitors In Order to Keep Participants Safe

Everyone needs to work together to stop the spread of the coronavirus, which means not having as much in-person contact. As the weather warms, visiting outdoors is an option to support family visits with participants. However, it is important that everyone continues to follow public health guidelines about social distancing and other prevention measures, even during outdoor visits.

Indoor visits to shift-staffed group homes, including family visits, are suspended until further notice. One indoor visitor at a time may be allowed if that visitor is considered critical to help a participant's mental health and well-being. This may include family members, friends or companions who can uniquely provide comfort to the participant.

Indoor visits to home-share homes should be restricted to the greatest extent possible. However, home-share providers can request approval from the participant's CSW for an indoor visit with a family member. It should be a mutual decision involving the home-share provider, participant, CSW and overseeing agency (where applicable) and must not expose high risk groups (due to age or medical conditions) to COVID-19.

All visitors (indoor or outdoor to any home share or shift-staffed group home) must answer screening questions before visiting the participant's home. Visitors who have cold/flu symptoms, have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 or who have travelled outside of Manitoba within the last 14 days, will not be able to visit the home.

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CLDS is suspending families from taking their loved ones away from their home for a visit, as this increases community contact for the participant and could increase the risk for other residents in the home. However, short visits away from the participant's home may occur if the visit is deemed critical to the participant's mental health or well being. These short visits must be approved by the participant's CSW.

CLDS will continue to get direction from public health regarding family visits to homes. We will provide you with updates as decisions about visitation are made.

Access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

CLDS wants to make sure all staff have the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need to safely support CLDS participants. The Department of Families has worked closely with Shared Health to get the PPE recommended by public health officials, including eye shields, masks, gloves and gowns.

Staff who provide support to participants in shift-staffed homes are required to wear eye shields and masks at all times, gloves only when providing intimate personal care and gowns if a participant has COVID-19 or is presumed to have the virus.

Staff who are going into family homes, supported independent living or home shares, must ask all residents screening questions to determine if there is risk. If a resident answers "yes" to any of the questions, the staff must wear PPE.

Self-Care and Protecting Each Other

COVID-19 has meant keeping our distance from each other including acquaintances, friends and loved ones. This has caused stress and anxiety for all of us, including CLDS participants, their families and support networks.

The Manitoba government has developed a free and confidential online mental health therapy program to help manage the anxiety and stress caused by COVID-19.

Information about this tool, which can help with caring for family and community members, is available online. Please visit <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/bewell/virtualtherapy.html> for details about the tool.

We can protect each other from COVID-19 by following the advice of provincial public health officials:

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- maintain safe social and physical distancing;
- wash your hands for 20 seconds and as often as possible; and
- stay home to the greatest extent possible.

Anyone who is concerned about a possible COVID-19 exposure should call Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or Toll Free at 1-888-315-9257, to be screened to see if a test is required.

Please visit <https://www.manitoba.ca/covid19> for up-to-date and reliable COVID-19 information. The CLDS program will continue to provide you with updates as decisions about services are made. We are committed to working with you to get through this challenging time together.

Message from Family Advocacy Network of Manitoba

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the COVID-19 situation while supporting a family member with a developmental disability and would like to connect with other families who are in a similar situation for information or simply for moral support, please feel free to send an email to families.caregivers@gmail.com. You can also visit our closed Facebook page entitled Family Advocacy Network of Manitoba.

If you do not have internet access or just want to talk to another human voice on the phone, please call Deb Roach at 204-612-4806 or Audra Latschislaw at 204-391-2851.