

March 20, 2020

Dear Disability Service Providers:

The response to COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving situation. As more information is learned and decisions are made by Alberta Health Services (AHS) and Community and Social Services (CSS) in response to the situation, CSS will endeavour to provide you with updates. You will receive these updates primarily through the Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS).

All service providers are encouraged to ensure their staff are taking appropriate actions and precautions by following the advice on the Alberta Health Services website www.albertahealthservices.ca to reduce the risk of infection related to COVID-19.

CSS and ACDS are working together to support a coordinated ministry and community response to COVID-19. This will ensure you have up-to-date information and a single place to go to have your questions answered. More information and resources to support services providers in planning for the pandemic are available on the ACDS website: acds.ca/resources/pandemic_planning_resources.html.

We recognize and value your extraordinary commitment and contributions and thank you for your support to Albertans with disabilities every day. This is especially evident now as we are dealing with COVID-19. We know your staff are continuing to support Albertans with disabilities and their families, while at the same time taking care of their own health needs and those of their family, friends and community.

We understand that service providers are working hard to balance the needs of their staff who are affected by COVID-19 with continuing to provide disability services – and we know this means that some FSCD and PDD services are not able to be maintained at the same level or provided in the same way as they have been in the past. In order to support service providers be responsive to quickly changing circumstances, staff will work with you using your existing allocation to manage, adjust or move services as required to ensure client and staff safety.

In addition, we encourage you and your staff to use any available alternatives to in-person meetings when engaging with clients. This includes the use of phone and teleconference. As part of the risk assessment prior to any visit with a client, it is recommended your staff call and inquire about any recent travel by the client or if the client has been in contact with anyone that recently traveled internationally. Also ask about the client's general health: are there any displayed signs or symptoms of infection, illness or flu?

We encourage anyone wondering if they need to be tested to use the AHS online screening tool to determine whether they need to call Health Link 811. Anyone with health concerns or questions should call Health Link 811. Health Link 811 is seeing high call volume and is working to manage wait times, but please stay on the line. This is the best way to arrange for testing, if needed.

We are asking all service providers to track all COVID-19 related costs. If you have questions about your contract or funding, please contact your regional Community and Social Services contract manager.

Please visit alberta.ca/COVID19 for daily updates. The government will continue to keep Albertans fully informed of any developments in the days ahead. We encourage you to continue working with your colleagues and to support one another – stay well.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Stinson, Assistant Deputy Minister
Program Policy and Improvement, Community and Social Services

Jason Chance, Assistant Deputy Minister
Delivery Services, Community and Social Services