

Measures and Strategies for Self-Direction in Response to COVID-19

Applied Self-Direction has been working closely with our members in states, Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), and Financial Management Services (FMS) organizations as they respond to COVID-19. Below are some of our members' reported measures and strategies for self-direction programs.

Strategies for Shelter-in-Place

- Distribute letters on official letterhead that verify "essential worker" status for homecare workers and FMS staff to show to the parties enforcing Shelter-in-Place orders (i.e., law enforcement).

Hiring and Enrollment Flexibilities

- Waive caregiver relationship restrictions. For instance, in Pennsylvania, spouses and individuals with power of attorney may now serve as employees of participants.
- Relax criminal background check requirements with the understanding these may be done in the future following the emergency.
- Remove fingerprinting checks with the understanding these may be done in the future following the emergency.
 - Fingerprinting during coronavirus response is closed or extremely slow in all states.
- Allow for verbal approval of key forms with the understanding signatures will be required later, particularly for enrollment forms.
- Lower minimum hiring age from 18 to 16 years old.
- Remove training requirements or allow online training completion.

Service Flexibilities

- Expand services that can be self-directed.
- Increase services, and therefore individual budgets or spending plans, to accommodate for closed schools and day programming.
- Halt in-home visits.
 - Conduct meetings online or by telephone.
- Increase flexibility about what can be offered via telehealth as opposed to face-to-face.
- Allow exceptions to eligibility in Medicaid.
- Approve new live-in workers to enable participants to limit the number of individuals that come into their home.
- Allow for verbal approval of some documentation, including timesheet corrections.
- Allow to use home and community-based services (HCBS) during hospitalization.
- Allow retainer payments to be issued to providers.
- Allow for increased use of respite.
- Allow for emergency or off-cycle payroll.
- Waive cost share requirements.

Budget Support

- Lift budget caps or increase individual budgets (some up to 30%).
- Provide one-time cash stipends for emergency supplies.
- Allow budget overages.
- As adult day programs temporarily close, move Adult Day funding to self-direction to allow individuals to receive services in home.

Communication Strategies

- Communicate with all stakeholders that the FMS agency is fully operational and available to provide assistance.
- Develop a COVID-19 FAQ on the FMS agency's website, addressing questions for workers such as *Should I go to work?* and *Can I have a letter that verifies I am an essential worker?*
- Conduct a webinar for state and MCO clients about flexibility in waiver authority (in particular self-direction).
- Provide a tutorial on how to submit timesheets via smartphone.

Administrative Strategies

- Monitor budget utilization reports for under-utilization as this can help determine where health and safety checks are needed.
- Utilize online notary where required (for example: <https://www.notarycam.com/>).
 - This technology may not be allowed in all states.
- Utilize previously developed disaster recovery plan.
- Focus on critical activities only.