



Message from Director Jeff Davis, March 30, 2020

Hello, everyone, this is Jeff Davis, director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. I'd like to share a little message with you today. And we'll try and do this continually throughout this health crisis. But I wanted to start today, as we begin talking about that, and those that matter the most to us. And that's the individuals that we support. And as all of you know, we took some steps early on to keep people at home, consistent with the governor's message. And we changed in different ways in doing that.

But we've asked a lot of you as our residential providers, you know, to keep the individuals at home and keep them safe. That's consistent for this reason, and that was to limit the exposure to this health crisis. And if we can keep folks at home and support you, then we can limit their exposure, and the individuals we serve, have a better chance of surviving this crisis in whole, healthy and otherwise. And we know the crisis is going to get harder as we'll move forward. It's going to tax you even more. We're going to ask more of you and your particular staff.

But there are very specific scientific health reasons for efforts to stay at home. And we appreciate, acutely appreciate, the taxing nature of this challenge of keeping people at home, and encouraging and supporting your direct support professionals as you do that. So we're going to stay with you, as you do this, as we learn, you will learn. I'm confident we will see that we've done the best we possibly can throughout this state of emergency.

But I can't go any further before I get to that most valued piece of this puzzle, professionally, and that is our direct support professionals. And I want to say to you as director, that you are never far from my mind every moment, in some respects, of every day. I understand the sacrifice that you are making, the commitment that you were making, to those that we support, and you are coming in, and you are engaging, and you're doing what we asked of you and you're doing your job out of your love for those that we serve, out of your professional responsibility.

We have asked an enormous amount of you to balance your family and your profession. And we're going to continue to ask you, that of you, because it's essential. You are necessary to our success in every possible way. And I want you to know that, that we appreciate that. And we're going to continue to find ways to support you in doing that. Now that we are with you, and that what you do, in the ways that you do it matter the most.



And so I ask of you, in particular, direct support professionals, wherever you are, in whatever facet of residential, the provision of residential services that you provide, know that we care about you and that we are with you and that we are trying, we are trying to support you in the best ways that we can. So I want to back up for a moment and give you a sense of what we've tried to do to this point. As we move forward. We have waived or relaxed over 30 administrative rules.

And while that to you, as direct support professionals, may, you may see that or not see that. But the point to that was, so that we can increase our flexibility almost immediately. So that we can accrue the structure throughout our system, particularly our provider structure, to make sure that we can get paid on time, get paid quicker, that we can hire staff quicker, that we can provide really, it is reducing the regulatory burden on our provider agencies.

So that we can focus primarily on the health and safety of the individuals we support. And by doing that, to making your jobs as easy as they can be, given the context of our crisis. And so that's our goal. That's what we have done to this point, as we continue to try and put that structure in place for when this increasing surge happens, a number of individuals throughout our country, but certainly right within our system, and ultimately that are affected in one way or another.

So we'll continue on that and we'll continue to try and support our provider base in different ways as we go forward in doing that, but knowing that it's ultimately for the individuals, and then for you on the ground that are helping them, we can make this simpler. So know that we appreciate you that all of our affection is to you, and to our provider agencies. As we move forward, we'll try and share more and more of the message of what we're doing, and how we're doing. And how we continually try and adapt to this challenge before us.

I know that we're going to, together, make it out of this challenge, make it out, and what I'm seeing on the ground, and kind of creativity, and relationships building, and I can't say this enough to anyone and everyone that is listening to this, relationships matter, relationships between provider management and direct support, relationships between our counties and our providers, relationships between the state and our county partners.

I'm seeing them play themselves out in large measure, in ways that I could only hope for, in the way that people are trying to work together and adapt and do this, and we're going to put emphasis on strengthening those relationships and keeping them, keeping



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those relationships solid the midst of all this challenge. So know that we care about you, know that we are always thinking about you. I'll continue to communicate with you in messages like this regularly, and we will find other venues and creative ways to stay in touch as well.