



## DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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### COVID-19 Family Support Message

Family Support 360 Service Coordinators,

The Family Support 360 program is fundamentally designed to support children outside of school hours. Family Support does not provide funding for typical childcare costs, and companion care budgets are authorized to support children after school hours. COVID-19 has forced families to identify creative ways to support their child at home in isolation with minimal assistance from their school district.

It is incredibly important that we have the health and well-being of our families in the forefront during this time. Many families may need additional supports due to this ever-evolving situation. While it is possible that Family Support may not be able to meet each of our families and participants needs through authorized services, the focus should be on how we can find and connect them to resources outside of what the waiver may be able to offer. While we can begin with reaching out to families and saying, "A lot has changed over the last few weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, how are things going for you?" The results of that question could lead the conversation down many different paths. Please explore local and federal resources during this time that might be of assistance. The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health has a resource on available crisis hotlines for many different areas of concern that families might have <https://www.ffcmh.org/crisis-hotlines>.

Any needs that families may have related to special education services should be addressed by requesting an IEP meeting and through the local school district. This may include the need for technology to support learning at home and the delivery of curriculum. Family Support is intended to support the needs of the child's disability that qualifies them for Family Support related to their ability to perform activities of daily living and was not designed to provide educational supports.

It is also important that we discover unique ways to support adult participants on the program. There may be individuals who have lost their jobs or are struggling because they can't interact socially with their friends and this can certainly take a toll on their mental health. At this time, we need to be creative on how we can employ technology to provide virtual supports through personal and companion care services. As long as the services delivered meet the requirements of the waiver and the Financial Assistance Guidelines, it is very possible that technology platforms like Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, etc. can be used so that individuals can continue receiving much needed supports. An example of this might be a companion care provider supporting an individual to complete household tasks like laundry or budgeting through a FaceTime call.

While ARSD only requires annual ISP meetings and quarterly monitoring, I would employ each of you to increase the frequency in which you reach out to families during this time. One suggestion that we received from a family member was to ensure that all participants have one-page profiles developed at this time, in case there was a situation when a primary caregiver may be sick. This is a great opportunity for Family Support Coordinators to work directly with families and participants to develop and update one-page profiles.

As always, please contact DDD if you have any questions or concerns.

### Family Support Policy Revisions due to COVID-19

#### **3006-G: Recreation, Leisure and Social Opportunities – General Funding \$1,000 per plan year**

Funding will be provided for the participant (also cost for sibling or friend to accompany if no other funding is available and it would make a difference in the friend going or not going) when the plan demonstrates that recreational opportunities promote inclusion, social relationships with others in the community, and provide a sense of purpose, shaping who the individual is and how the individual fits into the community. Examples: cost of summer camp, Health club/YMCA class fee/membership, activity league fees, or other inclusive community activities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, participants may choose to use pre-existing recreation funds for the purchase of a technology device to maintain social interaction and engagement with the broader community outside of their home. The approved technology device needs to be able to access emergency resources through WI-FI calling. Funding must be available within the participant's current plan to access an approved device. Devices can be provided to participants who do not currently own or have access to technology that will promote social interaction. Participants/families are responsible to obtain a WIFI connection. During this COVID-19 pandemic, companies like Midco are offering internet services to those in need at reduced rates <https://www.midco.com/covid-19-response/>

Please see below a list of allowable technology devices. Comparable tablet/electronic devices not listed below may be requested if purchased new and within the maximum allowance. The maximum allowable to cover a device is \$125, including the cost of shipping:

Amazon Echo Show 5- \$89.99

Amazon Fire Tablet 8 HD- \$79.99

Funding cannot be used towards the following items:

iPads

PlayStation

Xbox

Laptops

Cell phones

### **Virtual Supports for Companion Care, Personal Care, and Supported Employment**

As long as the service delivery complies with waiver and Financial Assistance Guideline service definitions, technology can be used to continue to deliver services and supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. The services delivered must be approved in the ISP and the goals outlined in the service support plan signed by both the participant and the provider. Examples of this may include, but are not limited to:

- Companion care- using a virtual platform to continue to promote increased socialization. This can include a provider assisting a participant to engage in social interaction with friends and other community members participants through a platform like Zoom.
  - One provider can serve participants through group companion care, but the rate must be adjusted to the number of participants served. For example, an appropriate group rate may be \$30 an hour, therefore \$10 an hour should be billed to each participant's plan.
- Personal care- a provider can use FaceTime or a similar platform to provide verbal prompting for a participant to perform activities of daily living.
- Supported employment- a provider could assist a participant who may have lost their job to complete online job applications or look for employment opportunities.