



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Department of Developmental Services
1000 Washington Street, Suite 401
Boston, MA 02118

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn E. Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Marylou Sudders
Secretary

Jane F. Ryder
Commissioner

Area Code (617) 727-5608
TTY: (617) 624-7590

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Dear DDS Community:

Since many of the pandemic restrictions were lifted in Massachusetts, I know many have been wondering what that means for DDS programs and your loved ones. This week, we are releasing updated guidance for visitation, group homes, day programs, and transportation.

While greater flexibility is allowed for fully vaccinated individuals, safety measures will remain in place to protect your loved ones and the staff who care for them. Staff will continue to wear masks in day programs and group homes, group homes will continue surveillance testing, and visitors will continue to be screened.

Please know that your loved one's disability does not mean they have to follow a different set of rules. In most settings, if they are fully vaccinated, that means wearing a mask is a choice.

We hope that you and your loved ones are now vaccinated. If not, now is the time. The Homebound Vaccination Program is now available across the state to anyone with trouble getting to a vaccination site. Call 1-833-983-0485 to schedule your in-home vaccination. Many local vaccination sites also allow walk-in appointments and you will find no need to wait in line. Find a vaccination site near you using the [VaxFinder website](#). If you need help, please contact your DDS Service Coordinator.

I know you are eager to return to your pre-pandemic routines and services, including regularly attending in-person day programs. We are working hard with



our providers to transition your loved ones back to in-person day and employment services when they are ready. Many factors, including hiring staff, arranging transportation, and employer participation contribute to an individual's ability to return to day and employment services. As you may know, many industries are currently struggling with a staff shortage. Staffing continues to be a challenge for most of our providers, impacting the return to day services.

As our systems rebuild their capacity to safely reopen, it is important to remain connected with your DDS Service Coordinator to receive up-to-date information on when your loved one's in-person programming and transportation will resume. Please know that virtual day service delivery may be available and that we are committed to working with you to transition your loved one back to services as soon as possible.

On the pages that follow, please find more important updates including visitation guidance, vaccination resources, and links to updated guidance for group homes, day programs, and transportation.

As always, please stay in contact with your Service Coordinator and Area Office and follow the Department on our website (mass.gov/dds) and social media for the latest updates.

Take good care,

Jane



COVID-19 Restrictions Lifted

On May 29, the Commonwealth lifted COVID-19 restrictions, except in certain settings including group homes, day programs, and transportation. Important COVID-19 protocols on surveillance testing, PPE, and infection control will remain in place for our programs.

Vaccination Update

- All people **age 12+** in Massachusetts are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Walk-in appointments are now available** at most vaccination sites, meaning you no longer need to book an appointment in advance.
- The **Homebound Vaccination Program** is now available to anyone with trouble getting to a vaccination site. **Call 1-833-983-0485** to schedule your in-home vaccination.
- **Call 2-1-1** or (877) 211-6277 to schedule an appointment over the phone.
- Use the [VaxFinder](#) website to search for appointments at pharmacies, health care providers, and other community locations.

If you need help planning a COVID-19 vaccination for an individual served by DDS, please contact your DDS Service Coordinator.

Wearing Masks

Individuals served by DDS should follow the public mask guidance in public settings. If you are vaccinated, wear a mask if the setting requires it. If you are unvaccinated, public health guidance recommends you continue to wear masks in public and settings in which others may be unvaccinated.

Visitation

We have asked our residential settings to return to their pre-pandemic visitation policies and practices with the following exceptions:

- Continued screening of all visitors for symptoms of illness and COVID-19 infection.
- Suspended visitation when a resident is isolating due to COVID infection or there is a COVID-19 outbreak at the program.
- Visitors must wear masks indoors at the home except if fully vaccinated and visiting a fully vaccinated resident in their room. Staff are still required to wear masks in group homes, regardless of vaccination status.
- Residents who are fully vaccinated may visit with loved ones who are fully vaccinated without maintaining social distancing or wearing masks, if they choose.



Please see below for helpful links and resources:

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- Massachusetts vaccine information: mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine
- Find available appointments using VaxFinder.mass.gov
- [Homebound Vaccination Program](#)
- [FAQ: Transportation to COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments for MassHealth Members](#)
- [Accessibility Information - Mass Vaccination Sites](#)
- [Vaccine Appointment Guide](#)
 - [What to Know Before You Go](#)
 - [What You Need for Your Appointment](#)
- [Vaccine FAQ: Vaccine Safety](#)
- [Vaccine FAQ in multiple languages](#)

Visitation Guidance

- [Visitation Guidance for DDS Residential Programs](#)

Guidance for DDS Programs

- [Residential and Congregate Care Guidance](#)
- [Day Program Guidance](#)
- [Human Services Transportation Guidance](#)
- [Human Services Transportation Plan Checklist](#)

DDS Resources

- [Visit the DDS website](#)
- [Contact a DDS Area Office](#)
- [Interactive DDS Regional Map](#)
- Follow @DDSMass on social media
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Twitter](#)
 - [Instagram](#)