DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

News stories

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Day services to reopen for all people with disabilities

State 'turning the dial' for programs closed due to COVID-19 pandemic

July 12, 2020

More people with disabilities will be able to return to programs that support employment and social activities under new guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Beginning Monday, July 13, individuals who live in group homes and other congregate care settings will be able to attend day services programs. Providers are required to have a COVID-19 preparedness plan in place to protect service participants and staff and follow other state licensing requirements related to hours and capacity.

"Nothing is more important to us than the health of all Minnesotans – including emotional and social health," said Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead. "My team and I have remained focused on turning the dial, as much as is prudent given the health risks, to get these providers back in service of the people they support."

Many day service programs for people with disabilities closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are about 300 day services locations in Minnesota that serve about 6,000 people per month. Since then, DHS has worked with providers to carefully consider how programs can gradually and safely reopen. On May 30, the department announced partial reopening of programs for people who live in their own homes, as well as new options for providing services remotely.

"Recent decreases in COVID-19 cases in group homes across the state, as well as Minnesota Department of Health guidance, helped us decide that this is the right time to reopen services for all," Harpstead said.

To prevent the spread of the virus, individuals are prohibited from attending a day service facility if they live with any person with an active case of COVID-19 or have had COVID-19 exposure in the last 14 days.

People with disabilities still have the right to make an informed choice about whether they want to return to a day service facility. Individuals and their support team should consider any underlying health conditions, as well as factors such as whether the person can protect themselves and others by washing their hands often; avoiding touching their eyes, nose and mouth; covering their coughs and sneezes; and wearing a protective mask or cloth face covering.

Remote services and services in the community will continue to be available provided health department guidelines are followed.

Harpstead praised providers for finding new ways to serve individuals remotely.

“We’ve seen many innovative providers develop creative approaches using technology,” she said. “It’s exciting to think about how we can maintain those options when the pandemic is over.”

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