IDHS announces modifications and closures of IDHS offices to follow health and safety guidelines for COVID-19

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Family Community Resource Centers remain open with reduced public-facing staff, Division of Rehabilitation Services' Offices are closed with staff still providing all services remotely

CHICAGO/SPRINGFIELD - Today, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) announces that all Division of Rehabilitation Services' (DRS) Offices will close until early April and all Family Community Resource Centers (FCRC) will remain open with reduced staff to follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) social distancing guidelines during the coronavirus situation.

While there are no confirmed cases of Coronavirus among IDHS employees, out of an abundance of caution, starting today, IDHS is taking action regarding 45 DRS' offices and 75 FCRCs. DRS' offices are expected to reopen in early April, and FCRCs will have a reduced workforce of 30-50% staff working from the public-facing offices. Many of the staff who are not working at the public-facing offices will be working remotely and still able to process important benefits.

DRS' customers can reach their local offices through the regular office phone numbers that can be found on the IDHS Website Office Locator at http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12 or online at www.DRS.illinois.gov.

While FCRCs remain open, IDHS highly encourages customers who can apply for and manage their benefits online to do so at ABE.illinois.gov or by calling the ABE Call Center at 1-800-843-6154. This is an important message to help keep IDHS staff and customers safe during this time of social distancing.

"Please, take this unprecedented situation seriously. As we work in coordination with our sister agency, the Illinois Department of Public Health, we learn new information daily," said IDHS Secretary Grace B. Hou. "We remain dedicated to finding the safest, most responsible way to keep life-giving and life-changing programs and services available throughout this crisis, but we need your help. If you can, I urge you to use our online resources or call by phone."

The department announces these changes in strong partnership with AFSCME Council 31, other bargaining units, and many advocacy organizations across the state.

"We appreciate the steps DHS has taken to ensure that people with disabilities will continue to receive the support they need during its office closure since a majority of our consumers rely on emergency food relief (SNAP), cash assistance (TANF) and Medicaid among other critical h- man ser- ices. We are committed to -orking -ith DHS d-ring this -nprecedented time to take the nrece-tionar- meas-res

critical human services. We are committed to working with DHS during this unprecedented time to take the precautionary measures necessary to promote health and safety of those most in need," said Karen Tamley, President and CEO of Access Living

"The coronavirus crisis calls upon DHS and all of us to address difficult and unprecedented questions. There are strong competing priorities. It is essential to try to balance the safety of people needing assistance, the workers who serve them, and the general public in the effort to control the spread of the virus. It is also essential to get vital services to people with heightened needs in this difficult time. DHS's plan for how to address all these factors appears to strike the right balance. We will, of course, continue to monitor the situation closely and contribute to any needed improvements. We commend DHS for this decisive, but also careful and balanced approach," said John Bouman, President of the Shriver Center

IDHS will continue to monitor the COVID-19 crisis, and to communicate with staff and customers about service availability.

Today's actions represent the latest step in a comprehensive response to this public health emergency.

Earlier this week, IDHS Secretary Grace Hou committed to protecting community-based providers of social services in Illinois, if their "operations are diminished or temporarily suspended during this national and state emergency."

IDHS continues preparing to broaden and strengthen all of its remote options for consumers - and will use every available resource to ensure residents of Illinois are not harmed by this temporary reorganization.

More information about COVID-19 is available at www.CoronaVirus.Illinois.Gov and through the COVID-19 Hotline, at 1-800-889-3931.