



## Protection & Advocacy Project

400 East Broadway, Suite 409

Bismarck, ND 58501-4071

Phone: (701) 328-2950 Fax: (701) 328-3934

TO: DD Service Provider Directors  
DHS/DD Division  
NDACP Exec. Dir.

FROM: *isl* Teresa Larsen, P&A Exec. Dir.

DATE: March 19, 2020

SUBJ: Work during the pandemic

Let's face it. The pandemic is overwhelming. I believe however, that with the proper focus, and good communication, the DD service delivery system is up to the task of keeping safe the people it supports. We will need to work together to make this happen.

This afternoon a conference call was held with DDD, P&A, NDACP, and a couple of non-NDACP members. I'd like to outline some of the discussion.

1. P&A is providing the option for its staff to work from home (telecommute). P&A is still "open for business" but most of the work will be done via phone & other technology. This is in the interest of "health & safety for all".
2. Reporting requirements for a/n/e, and timelines, remain unchanged.
3. Reports of a/n/e, including serious events, are all routed to P&A's centralized intake. This will remain the same.
4. During the pandemic, the default will change to the provider doing the investigation and sending it to P&A for review (secondary). This is to lessen the need for P&A to enter others' homes or facilities. Again, for everyone's safety. Coincidentally, a workgroup of DDD, P&A and DD provider representatives has been working toward this goal.

[www.ndpanda.org](http://www.ndpanda.org)

Relay ND: 711

Toll Free: 1-800-472-2670

24 hour emergency service: 1-800-642-6694

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5. Unfortunately, the situation at hand has brought this to be implemented very quickly and without transition. Please note that once things have calmed down, the workgroup will reconvene and firm up how this will work going forward. So, keep notes on how this is working and/or not working. There are exceptions for the provider to do the primary investigation. They include:
  - a. The party suspected of a/n/e is not the DD provider (e.g., a family member, etc.)
  - b. P&A and the DD provider agree that P&A should do the primary investigation. This could be because the provider believes it has a conflict of interest or lacks trained staff, etc.
6. As is in place currently, timelines for completion of investigations may be extended for providers by the DD Division. The important piece is that risk management for the individual(s) is addressed in a timely and effective manner.
7. The group that met today will continue weekly meetings. While everyone is busy and it takes time to communicate, it is more important than usual to network and talk about what is going on and what is needed.
8. Because of potential health risks, if providers choose to put reasonable screening protocols in place for P&A to have access to a home or facility, P&A will comply.

I recently e-mailed a document titled "**COVID-19 Information by and For People with Disabilities**". If you didn't receive it, here is a link:

[https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plain-Language-Information-on-Coronavirus.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0L7N3HiV-qF2629RIpCmXbB6AgH3-xQ2Up\\_7rZjq4vztL2tF8KxHBenoE](https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plain-Language-Information-on-Coronavirus.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0L7N3HiV-qF2629RIpCmXbB6AgH3-xQ2Up_7rZjq4vztL2tF8KxHBenoE)

I like the above-referenced document because using it, or something similar, can help us explain to individuals what the pandemic is and that it applies to everyone... NOT just people with disabilities. It may be difficult for some individuals to understand why they can't do some of the activities they are used to doing or want to do because of the current situation. This

applies to all of us. NOT just people with disabilities. P&A may be able to help explain this to people.

Finally, Bruce Murry spoke with me about doing some sharing with the DD providers. Here's what I'm thinking...

- P&A plans to operate with common sense, taking into account the recommendations of the national CDC. This includes the implementation of "physical distancing" at all times possible. P&A assumes other entities will implement this as well. Some of your customers will not be happy about this and P&A recognizes that. Educating individuals about what is happening is encouraged... power struggles are discouraged. Let P&A know if it can help.
- While sometimes people or entities operate under the guise of "just do it and ask for forgiveness later", I would suggest that providers call P&A (and/or DDD as appropriate) and talk about any concerns. Transparency and effective communication are key... and can prevent headaches for everyone later.
- We can partner to make the circumstances as painless as possible for everyone involved, including people with developmental disabilities. Again, while it seems like the situation is overwhelming, good communication will help us to work together.

Please call me if you have questions or concerns. I will be happy to have a conversation with you. Be safe. Be healthy. Think positive. Thank you.