

April 17, 2020

North Dakota Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of 2019 novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). The North Dakota Department of Public Health is working closely with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide updated information about the COVID-19 outbreak.

This guidance will be updated as needed and as additional information is available. Please regularly check ndresponse.gov and www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19 for updated guidance.

Each organization faces specific challenges associated with implementation based on its population, physical space, driver etc., and will need to tailor these guidelines accordingly. **This guidance is intended to supplement, not supplant, provisions from regulatory agencies that oversee transportation organizations.** Organizations may develop their own policies, but these policies should be based on current science and facts and they should never compromise a consumer's or employee's health.

Background

What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and how does it spread?

- COVID-19 is a respiratory virus. Current symptoms have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever cough, and difficulty breathing.
- According to CDC, the virus is spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with each other (within about 6 feet).
- Spread is from respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Who should be most cautious?

- Those considered "high risk" include people over the age of 60, anyone with underlying health conditions or a weakened immune system, and pregnant women.

What should providers be doing to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19?

- **Screen yourself, drivers and members for any of the conditions below:**
 - Sick with fever (higher than 100.3 °F) or newly developed respiratory illness such as cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat
 - Recent international travel (i.e., within the past 14 days) from COVID-19-affected geographic areas
 - Close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days
- **Preparing and Educating Drivers**
 - During times of COVID-19 circulation in the community, ensure employees can stay home if they have symptoms of acute respiratory illness or if they need to care for a sick family member.
 - Make sure your employees are aware of these policies. Do not require a healthcare provider's note to validate illness or return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide this documentation.
 - If employees become ill with respiratory symptoms while at work, they should be sent home as soon as possible.

- Make sure your employees are aware of these policies. Sick persons should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or cough into their elbow or shoulder if tissues are not available) and perform hand hygiene immediately after.
 - Those with symptoms of acute respiratory illness should stay home and not return to work until they are free of fever (oral thermometer temperature of less than 100.3 degrees) and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without use of fever-reducing or other symptom altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).
 - If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 they cannot return to work until they have been authorized to leave their home by their local board of health.
- **Identify ways to limit direct person-to-person contact by leveraging technology, where appropriate.**
 - Allow call center and administrative staff to work from home, if possible
- **Provide access to personal protective equipment (PPE), such as facemasks and gloves, as available.**
 - CDC recommends universal use of Standard Precautions when caring for any consumer.
 - Reinforce the importance of strict adherence to Standard Precautions during all consumer encounters.
 - Standard Precautions are based on the principles that all blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions (except sweat), nonintact skin, and mucous membranes may contain transmissible infectious agents.
 - For example, a facemask and eye protection should be worn during the transportation of any consumer if splashes, sprays or coughs could occur during the consumer encounter.
 - Similarly, gloves should be worn if contact with body fluids, mucous membranes, or nonintact skin is anticipated.
- **Avoid unnecessary out of state or international travel and avoid large gatherings or crowds.**
 - Drivers provide essential services that help others access medical care. Driver health and the health of those you serve is of utmost importance.
 - Cancel and do not attend gatherings of more than 10 people.
- **Reinforce the practice of good daily hygiene with all staff, drivers and monitors.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially:
 - After going to the bathroom.
 - Before eating.
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; and
 - Upon entering and exiting the consumer's home.
 - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of tissue.
 - Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth without first carefully and fully washing your hands.
 - Properly clean all frequently touched surfaces on a regular basis using everyday cleaning products.
- **Staff emotional health.**
 - Emotional reactions to stressful situations such as new viruses are expected. Remind staff and drivers that feeling sad, anxious, overwhelmed, or having trouble sleeping, or other symptoms of distress is normal.
 - If symptoms become worse, last longer than a month, or if they struggle to participate in their usual daily activities, have them reach out for support and help.
 - If one is available, encourage employees to call their Employee Assistance Program. The National Disaster Distress Helpline is available with 24/7 emotional support and crisis counseling for anyone experiencing distress or other mental health concerns. Calls (1-800-985-5990) and texts (text TalkWithUs to 66746) are answered by trained counselors who will listen

to your concerns, explore coping and other available supports, and offer referrals to community resources for follow-up transportation and support.

- **Organizational Preparedness.** These preparedness steps may help protect your business while minimizing disruption to your important services.
 - Develop or review business continuity plans for how to keep critical services going if staff and/or attendance levels drop due to illness or taking care of ill family members or children that may be temporarily out of childcare or school settings.
 - Be prepared to change your practices as needed to maintain critical operations.
 - You may also wish to refer to [CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
 - Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so the site can operate even if key staff and/or drivers are absent.
 - Assure you have adequate supplies of soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizers, cleaning supplies, and garbage bags. If possible, a supply of disposable gloves and paper facemasks will be useful if persons become ill while at your work site.

Steps to follow if driver or someone they know or provide transportation for is sick:

- **If driver is sick:**
 - They should stay home and not come to work. Do not schedule them to work if they are sick.
 - Follow the steps outlined on page in the flow chart.
- **Follow the flow chart to determine the best transportation path for an individual for whom your agency provides transportation and who is diagnosed with COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms.**
- **If you have a driver that lives with a sick individual some general guidance to share with them includes:**
 - Keeping the sick person in a separate, well-ventilated room and apart from other people and pets as much as possible.
 - If a separate space is not available, keeping a distance of at least six feet from people who are well.
 - A sick person who is coughing or sneezing should wear a mask when around other people. If the sick person cannot wear a mask, the caregiver should wear a mask. The bathroom should be cleaned every day using a household disinfectant according to the directions on the label. Wear gloves while cleaning.
 - Providing the sick person with a separate bathroom if available and a trash bag within reach.
 - Limiting activities outside the home until the sick person is feeling well for at least one day.

Transportation Providers Screening Flow Chart

