

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

1600 NINTH STREET, Room 240, MS 2-13  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814  
TTY (916) 654-2054 (For the Hearing Impaired)  
(916) 654-1897



May 1, 2020

TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: REGIONAL CENTER MESSAGING TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES DURING  
COVID-19 OUTBREAK

The Department of Developmental Services (Department) recognizes that during the COVID-19 pandemic, regional centers must operate differently. During this difficult time for the individuals and families we serve, it is imperative that regional centers enhance and continuously monitor their communications with and responsiveness to their local communities. The Department applauds and recognizes the many exceptional efforts regional centers have taken to remain connected, supportive and responsive. The continued commitment of you and your staff remains critical in the effective response to this crisis. To that end, it is important for regional centers to remain purposeful in their outreach and communication with individuals and families. Individuals and families are increasingly reporting to the Department confusion about whether regional centers are open and difficulties connecting with their service coordinators.

To ensure statewide consistency, the Department is requiring each regional center to evaluate its current messaging and make necessary changes (e.g., updating website home page, phone systems, etc.) as well as evaluate its verification process for ensuring that every individual and family served is regularly contacted.

**Website and Phone Systems**

Each regional center website home page and main phone number message must emphasize that the regional center is in operation and readily available to support individuals, families and providers within their local communities. Whether the main phone number is answered by a regional center staff or a recorded greeting and directory, the following must be provided:

- An option to talk with a live person;
- A mechanism for routing calls to service coordinators and other staff; and
- A stated timeframe for when the caller can expect a timely return call.

Regional centers should notify their communities of their website, business hours and main phone number through newsletters and/or social media as appropriate.

**Service Coordinator Contacts**

The Department expects regional centers to require service coordinators to contact every individual and family on their caseloads and to document those contacts during this critical time. Though many regional centers report having done so, the Department has heard from individuals, families and advocacy groups that many have not been contacted.

**“Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices”**

Regional Center Executive Directors  
May 1, 2020  
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**Evaluation Summary**

Within one week of the date of this letter, please provide the Department a summary of your evaluation along with what actions you have or will take to ensure you are connected, accessible and responsive to your community. Please submit summaries to LeeAnn Christian, Deputy Director, Community Services Division, at [leeann.christian@dds.ca.gov](mailto:leeann.christian@dds.ca.gov).

Thank you for the dedicated work to your local community and supporting them during this crisis. If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact LeeAnn Christian at the email address above or (916) 738-9066.

Sincerely,

*Original Signed by:*

NANCY BARGMANN  
Director

cc: Regional Center Board Presidents  
Regional Center Administrators  
Regional Center Directors of Consumer Services  
Regional Center Community Services Directors  
Association of Regional Center Agencies