September 2, 2020

Dear Families…

I hope this letter finds you well. There have been modifications to the State Guidelines that govern visits to residential programs. This letter will explain not only these changes but also how NJID will accommodate individuals and their families. I suggest that you review this letter for the most updated information and retain it for your reference.

Visits with family and friends are important to everyone, especially individuals living in provider-managed settings. As New Jersey has flattened the curve of COVID-19 cases and transmission in the State, certain restrictions are being lifted. The New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) has issued new guidance that permits indoor visits to group homes with certain mandatory conditions that must be met.

All visits must be made by appointment only and must be scheduled forty-eight hours in advance of the visit. Which can only be scheduled with a management team member. Please call the residence’s main number to reserve a date and time. I also ask for your understanding if a particular time slot is unavailable. Also I request that if you cannot keep an appointment, please provide notification of the change of plans.

DDD has implemented two documents, the **Guardian Consent for Visitation During the COVID-19 Pandemic** (attached) must be completed by the individual or his/her guardian. This document must be submitted in advance of the visit and must list all potential visitors. This document will be kept on file for future visits. The **Visitor Agreement** document (attached) must be completed and submitted at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled visit and prior to access being granted to the home.

In addition to the aforementioned forms, NJID has developed a Health Screening Questionnaire which includes a temperature check. This document is to be completed on site and prior to granting access to the residence.

Visits will take place in a specially prepared designated sitting area. You may request an outdoor or indoor visit. To protect the health of all individuals, NJID has created designated area within each residence.

There is a limit of two visitors at one time. All visitors are required to wear a facemask covering at all times while at the home. This rule applies to everyone, including children. The group home will supply a facemask to each visitor.

Social distancing rules (6 feet apart) must be observed at all times. I understand that hugs are a natural greeting but this is discouraged to ensure everyone’s safety.

Dominic M. Ursino
President

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Robert J. Ferrara
Executive Director
Food is not permitted during the visits, unless the visitors prepare in advance and make arrangements to bring the food items prior to the visit, so that staff can ensure the packages are disinfected and available when the visit occurs. Sharing food or beverages during the visits is prohibited.

Hand sanitizer will be available and I encourage all to frequently use it while on the premises.

You can be assured that NJID Residential Services continues to follow CDC guidance and maintains the homes with diligent and thorough cleaning. NJID staff will disinfect all meeting areas before and after each use. Please consider the weather (especially heat and humidity) if you wish to arrange an outdoor visit.

Be advised that family visits outside of the group home or vacations are still strongly discouraged. If an individual chooses to leave his / her NJID residence without a NJID staff, they will not be permitted to return until they have a negative test result for COVID-19.

The State of New Jersey has issued a Travel Advisory, which lists States and U.S jurisdictions which have experienced a higher positivity rate of Covid-19 cases. Individuals traveling to or returning to New Jersey from one of these areas are required to self-quarantine for 14 days in the State of New Jersey.

A list of States in this travel advisory can be found at [https://covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov)

If a family chooses to take a loved one from a NJID residence and travel to one of the aforementioned travel advisory states, upon return, the individual is required to follow mandatory protocols before readmission to the NJID group home, is approved.

1. The individual must provide proof of a negative Covid-19 test result dated on the first day returning to New Jersey,

2. The individual must “Self Quarantine” in New Jersey for a period of 14 consecutive days.

3. The individual must provide proof of a second negative Covid-19 test result at the end of the quarantine period.

4. The proof of lodging and Covid-19 test result must be provided and reviewed by the Director of Residential Services before the individual can be approved to return to his or her NJID residence.

NJID continues to encourage families, friends and individuals to remain in contact with each other. Phone calls, FaceTime, Skype calls are all successfully used. NJID has and continues to accommodate a variety of video conferencing platforms and families are encouraged to take advantage of these tools.

NJID continues to strictly monitor all staff with health screening and temperature checks before the start of every shift. There are no exceptions to this policy. NJID staff are required to wear face shields or facial coverings while working in Residential Services.
We all share the frustrations and concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. NJID continues to implement aggressive measures to control the Coronavirus and I am still pleased to report that as of today, no individual served by NJID residential services has contracted the virus. Your cooperation has helped to make this possible and we continue to be thankful for your help and understanding.

As I have shared many times before the true “Heroes” of this Pandemic are the dedicated and compassionate staff of NJID’s Residential Services. Their commitment to your loved ones is remarkable and unwavering.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to email me at Robert.Link@NJID.org or call me at (732) 549-6187 x4001.

Very truly yours,

**Robert J. Link**

Robert J. Link
Director of Residential Services