



Date: April 15, 2020

To: Community Attendant Services (CAS) Providers
Family Care (FC) Providers
Primary Home Care (PHC) Providers

Subject: Information Letter No. 20-16 – COVID-19 Guidance for Community Attendant Services, Family Care, and Primary Home Care Providers

The purpose of this information letter is for Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to provide guidance regarding COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) for Community Attendant Services (CAS), Family Care (FC), and Primary Home Care (PHC) providers. CAS, FC, and PHC providers are required to comply with state and federal laws, rules, regulations, and letters regarding their Medicaid services. The guidance in this information letter, including any suspensions from procedures currently required by rules, regulations, or policies, is effective as of March 16, 2020 and will continue until HHSC notifies providers otherwise.

In response to COVID-19, HHSC will allow CAS, FC, and PHC providers to suspend face-to-face supervisory visits and instead conduct interdisciplinary team (IDT) meetings by telephone or by video (virtually) if possible.

Supervisory Visits

CAS, FC, and PHC providers may suspend face-to-face supervisory visits required for service plan development, annual reassessments, or to allow additional hours to be added to the service plans.¹ In addition, CAS, FC, and PHC providers may suspend face-to-face supervisory visits required for transfers.² CAS, FC, PHC providers should conduct these visits by telephone or telehealth.

¹ 40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §47.65(a), Relating to supervisory visits for annual reassessments

² 40 TAC §47.69, Relating to service requirements for transfers

Inter-Disciplinary Team (IDT) Meetings

CAS, FC, and PHC providers may conduct IDT meetings³ by telephone or by video (virtually) if capable.

Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

Limited Entry of Non-Essential Persons

CAS, FC, and PHC providers are advised to educate individuals and family members about the need to limit the number of people entering the home of the individual receiving services. Providers should encourage individuals to deny persons entry into their home if they:

- have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat;
- within the last 14 days, have had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or are under investigation for COVID-19;
- within the last 14 days, have traveled to [states with sustained community transmission](#); or
- within the last 14 days, have traveled internationally to [countries with sustained community transmission](#).

Avoid Leaving the Home

Governor Abbott issued order [GA-14](#) on March 31st. The order prohibits individuals from leaving their homes for non-essential activities. Individuals can leave their home for essential activities including medical care and grocery shopping. Providers should educate individuals receiving services about the Governor's Order and restricted movement for their own safety and health.

³ 40 TAC §47.49, Relating to IDT meetings

Follow State and Federal Guidance

CAS, FC, and PHC program supervisors must follow guidance issued by:

- The [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC)
- The [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) (DSHS)
- Texas [HHSC](#)
- Governor Gregg Abbott
- Your local public health department
- Your local government guidance

Helpful information from these sources includes a list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) from the CDC and Disaster Response Toolkit from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). DSHS has also published [COVID-19: Guidance for Public Health Home Service Providers](#).

CAS, FC, and PHC providers should contact your local health departments, or DSHS if there is no local health department, for:

- questions related to COVID-19; or
- if you suspect an individual receiving services has COVID-19.

CAS, FC, and PHC providers, as well as CAS, FC, and PHC personal attendants, should take the following precautions including, but not limited to:

- Limiting physical contact, such as handshakes and hugging;
- Reinforcing strong hygiene practices, such as proper handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, and using hand sanitizer (this is especially important for individuals and service providers who utilize tactile modes of communication);
- Practicing social distancing;
- Using gloves when supporting individuals; and
- Regularly disinfecting all high-touch surfaces, such as counters, doorknobs, computer equipment, communication devices, and telephones.

PHC, CAS and FC attendants must continue to follow the guidance provided in [COVID-19: Guidance for Community Attendants and In-Home Caregivers](#), including guidance about the required screening of service providers and persons with legal authority to enter the residence.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact the CAS, FC, and PHC Policy team by emailing CCADPolicy@hsc.state.tx.us.

Sincerely,

[signature on file]

Emily Zalkovsky
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Office of Policy and Program
Medicaid and CHIP Services