



HEALTH + SAFETY

UPDATE

OPTIONS Family of Services update regarding COVID-19: 11/24/2020

To our Friends and Family:

We would like to share the steps OPTIONS Family of Services has taken to address COVID-19 and is continuing to take as the virus and our community response evolves. We are committed to the health and safety of all the individuals we support and our employees. As you are aware, COVID-19 is a virus that spreads easily from person to person. Signs and symptoms include, fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. We now know that symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and many people infected show a wide range of these symptoms ranging from mild to severe and some are asymptomatic.

In an address to all Californians from the California Department of Public Health, the State Public Health Officer states that, "Upon assessment of the recent, unprecedented rate of rise in increase in COVID-19 cases across California, the California Department of Public Health is taking immediate actions to prevent the spread of the virus". Effective 11/16/20, our area, both Santa Barbara and SLO County, has returned to the purple tier

that requires the highest level of protective measures be taken. In addition, Governor Gavin Newsom and the California Department of Public Health announced a limited stay at home order requiring generally that non-essential work, movement and gatherings stop between 10 PM and 5 AM in counties in the purple tier. The order will take effect at 10 PM Saturday, November 21 and remain in effect until 5 AM December 21. Effective November 17, 2020, gatherings in Santa Barbara County have been prohibited through Health Order 2020-12.14. It is stated in this Order that, “A “gathering” is any event or convening that brings together people from different households in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space, whether public or private”...and “Violation or failure to comply with this Order may constitute a misdemeanor punishable by fine of up to \$1,000, imprisonment, or both. (Health and Safety Code 101029, 120295 et seq.).

Here at OPTIONS we continue to focus on preparedness and protection and are closely following the information provided by a number of local, state, and federal health agencies to guide us. Our proactive approach has helped us ensure the safety of all our staff and persons served so far and are so glad to share that we have not seen an outbreak in any of our programs.

We have taken the following actions:

- We have provided staff training on virus protection protocols at each of our programs. These plans include increased hand washing—one of the best ways to prevent the virus, upon entering the program and throughout the day, with soap and water or a hand sanitizer.
- Increased environmental cleaning and disinfecting of common use areas and shared spaces such as bathrooms, doorknobs and kitchens has been implemented.

- We are encouraging handshakes and hugs to be replaced with other methods of friendly no contact greetings (“elbow bumps” with a smile or a wave and a smile).
- We are practicing social distancing whenever possible, avoiding restaurants, stores, libraries, movie theatres etc. on a temporary basis. Outings and activities are in open spaces or in very small group settings when allowed, as this varies by program. Non-essential appointments and meetings are being rescheduled or are being held by phone conferencing.
- Our visitation policy has been temporarily amended in order to avoid introducing the virus into our homes or programs. We are continuing to work with families to set up other modes of communication for the time being. In most cases, we are allowed to meet outside with masks and social distancing.
- Employees and persons served are asked to stay home when sick, or suspected of being sick. If staff have direct contact with somebody with a confirmed case of COVID-19, they are asked to self-quarantine.
- We are following guidance from the public health department when there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 that may impact individuals we serve or staff.
- Employees are asked to avoid large group activities during their time off and practice universal precautions in order to remain healthy and prevent introducing the virus to our persons served.
- We have relief staff cross trained in many programs to help with staffing in the event staff are out ill to try to keep services as consistent as possible.
- We created a persons served handbook to explain how re-opening will look in each program.

- Ongoing COVID surveillance testing of staff has been implemented at our CCL residential homes.
- We have developed creative ways to continue to provide day program services including at home gardening kits, personalized journals, art projects, and group zoom calls, etc. We are encouraging walks and outdoor activities to keep people engaged and active.

Some recent actions include:

- Creating a Holiday Visitation Protocol that addresses the various health and safety mandates as they apply to the different programs and counties we serve.
- Designing and implementing a new program, “Alternative Services” that addresses the needs of our persons served either virtually or in small group settings. We provide a monthly calendar of activities for persons served to choose from including, art classes, cooking classes, social cafes, exercise classes, budgeting classes, dance parties and much more. Alternative Services also provides a weekly, at home, art project and the opportunity to meet with a staff member to go on a walk or meet outside for a short period of time.
- As always, we are providing a holiday meal to all our residential programs as well as delivering meals to our persons served who live independently.

We continue to diligently monitor the COVID-19 situation on a daily basis and will continue to do so. Please feel free to contact us with any comments, questions or suggestions. We appreciate your support and kindness as we navigate this challenging situation together.

Thank you!

Debbie Bertrando, CEO

OPTIONS Family of Services