

August 2020 e-newsletter



New Horizons is OPEN

As of July 20, 2020 New Horizons has reopened its programs to participants during Phase I of our reopening process.

The four-phase reopening process will be structured as follows:

- Phase 1 -July 20-August 10, 2020-Capacity 25% participation
- Phase 2 -August 17-September 7, 2020-Capacity 50% participation
- Phase 3 -September 14-October 5, 2020-Capacity 75% participation
- Phase 4 -October 12-November 2, 2020-Capacity 100% participation

These dates are subject to change depending on our weekly assessments and the spread of COVID-19, as we continue to monitor the situation in Prince George's County and the State of Maryland.

From the Desk of the Executive Director



This pandemic has brought us to the oddest of times. Wearing a mask and social distancing before we can professionally and socially communicate with our participants, colleagues and families. Some of us are living normal lives and some are not, we do not know when this insidious virus will go away or when it will return. Everyone is stressed and uncomfortable in situations of uncertainty. The County and State executive orders have begun to lift in phases with some of the restrictions as it relates to COVID-19. Please look on the county and state websites for detailed information. Please know that staying safe continues to be the recommendation/encouraged from county and state officials. This means, wearing your mask while in public spaces, using good hand-washing techniques, and social

distancing.

New Horizons is aware of the effects that COVID-19 has had on our participants, families, employees and colleagues across the disability field. There have been so many different scenarios of how this virus has interrupted our daily lives. Since our re-opening on July 20, 2020, our first priority has been the health and safety of the employees, participants and families we serve. We have ensured that everyone returned to a healthy and safe environment at all of our program sites. New Horizons has implemented a four-phase process of re-opening during COVID-19. Each phase will be 2-3 weeks in duration. During Phase 1, individuals and staff will return to the facility at 25% capacity. The remaining individuals and staff will return at 25% in each of the remaining 3 phases, respectively. The use of protective gear and proper hygiene will be adhered to in all phases of reopening; including the use of masks, gloves, goggles, face shields, and proper hand sanitation. Our nursing staff will take the temperature of all participants, employees and visitors upon entering our facilities to ensure that temperatures are below 99.5. We continue to provide a mixture of service options to participants. The service options include:

- Face-to-Face support – At the center, community and the individual's home
- Telephonic support – Staff making phone calls to check in with the individual
- Virtual Video support – Staff meeting with the individual(s) on Zoom, google duo, etc.

We will continue to assess our protocols weekly to ensure that they are being followed and to ensure that everyone remains in a safe environment at all times. New Horizons will continue to follow the direction of Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and Prince George's County Executive, Angela Alsobrooks as they give updates on COVID-19.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me at 301-579-4250. Please remember to continue to be safe and everyone have a great week.

Citing the Pandemic, Feds Delay New Medicaid Waiver Rule

by Michelle Diament | July 16, 2020 | Disability Scoop

The Trump administration is holding off on implementing a Medicaid rule establishing a new standard for what counts as home- and community-based services for people with disabilities.

In a letter to state Medicaid officials this week, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said it would delay the compliance deadline for a 2014 regulation detailing criteria that programs must meet in order to be considered community-based and eligible to be

paid for through Medicaid home- and community-based services waivers.

Under the rule, home- and community-based settings must be places that individuals choose to live that are integrated in and provide full access to the community. They also must offer privacy, dignity and respect and allow people with disabilities the ability to make independent choices about their daily activities, physical environment and who they are in contact with.

The criteria apply to homes as well as day and job-training programs and other non-residential offerings provided through waivers.

Originally, there was a five-year transition period for states to come into compliance with the regulation, but the Trump administration already extended that deadline by three years to 2022. Now, the administration is pointing to the “unprecedented challenges” presented by COVID-19 as it announces another delay, this time to March 17, 2023.

“States’ stay-at-home and/or safer-at-home orders and the process of social distancing have made it difficult, if not impossible, for states to accurately evaluate how an individual is experiencing community integration in current HCBS settings,” wrote Calder A. Lynch, deputy administrator and director of the Center for Medicaid & CHIP Services. “These necessary directives have seriously impacted not only the measurement of community integration for individuals, but the intent of the settings rule to ensure that individuals with disabilities and older adults have the opportunity to be active participants in their communities.”

Lynch said the decision to bump back the compliance deadline for a second time came at the request of states who were struggling to assess settings.

The announcement drew mixed reaction from disability advocates. The HCBS Advocacy Coalition, a group of 20 national organizations that have pushed for implementation of the new rule, said the move sends the “wrong message” particularly with the previous implementation deadline still more than 20 months away.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the risks of large congregate settings and made the rule’s focus on more individualized supports in smaller and non-disability specific settings more important than ever,” the coalition, which includes The Arc, the National Disability Rights Network and the Center for Public Representation, among others, said in a statement. “States should see the settings rule as a critical part of their COVID-19 safety strategy and at the forefront of their reopening efforts.”

However, Desiree Kameka Galloway, director of the Autism Housing Network, which promotes housing options for adults with developmental disabilities, said the delay is warranted given that the pandemic could be influencing how services are being rendered. “Evidence of integration should be closely tied to the implementation

of one's person-centered plan," she said. "If (the deadline is) not extended, COVID-19 could be used as an excuse for why people have not been supported in the ways they envisioned and documented."

Federal Medicaid officials said at the time the rule was initiated that they were motivated by reports of homes built on the sites of former institutions that were being described as community based. They have indicated in the past that the rule is likely to affect services for more than a million people with disabilities across the nation.

New Horizons - Celebrating 51 Years of Changing Lives & Building Opportunities

NOW more than ever we need your support!
Please help us continue our MISSION for the next 50 years.

**Donate
Today!**