



**AVENUES**  
SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES

## **Supporting people with I/DD, their families, and the people that support them through COVID-19**

As everyone has experienced, things have been fluid over the past few weeks, with changes occurring daily related to supporting people to deal safely with COVID-19. By March 10th, Avenues SLS was planning for the eventuality of Sheltering In Place and began working to identify teams of staff (our Instructional Coaches) that would be able to Shelter in Place with the individuals we support. Our efforts over the past two weeks have been to use Person-Centered Practices to (one person at a time) develop the following for each of the 27 persons that Avenues SLS supports:

- Education plans for each person we support and the team & family members that support them regarding COVID-19
- COVID-19 transition books (in writing, with pictures, etc., personalized to each person's learning needs) to help explain the changes in routines people are experiencing in their lives, and letting them know that we are not the only ones who are impacted
- Staffing/support plans to minimize the number of people folks are in contact with (no more than 3 per team ideally) and that employees are not working with more than one person
- Plans to ensure people in Competitive Integrated Employment have coaches & safety procedures based on where they work (several of the people we support continue to contribute to their own communities by working at supermarkets and department stores)

While many services and businesses (Schools and Day Programs for example) have valid concerns with how they will be able to bill while their services have been shut down, the wonderful and dedicated staff at Avenues SLS continue to provide ESSENTIAL, LIFE SAVING SUPPORTS to adults with intellectual & developmental disabilities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through this Pandemic. We, like many Supported Living Service and residential service providers across the state, are working diligently to coordinate and provide whatever support is needed for each individual we support, and will continue to do so throughout the Pandemic.

**Our primary concerns are:**

We are accruing lots of overtime hours due to Sheltering in Place (at home) while minimizing the number of team members/housemates each person is in contact with. We hope that the Department of Developmental Services and the Regional Centers will take a leadership role during this Pandemic to identify easy solutions to get reimbursed for what is needed. If the Grocery industry can figure out a way to provide increased pay for workers during this time, then DDS should be able to figure out a way to reimburse providers for overtime accrued due to Health & Safety concerns based on CV-19 restrictions.

We also have staff who are losing hours due to people Sheltering in Place (limiting to 3 staff per team ideally), and/or being unable to work due to the need to stay sheltered at their own home with their children due to schools being shut down or because they live with at risk people. Many of our employees have family members with disabilities who live with them and are not receiving services during the Pandemic. We sincerely hope that the Federal Government, the California Legislators and Administration identify ways to provide necessary income support to these staff who are unable to work.

An additional concern is that the homes of the people we support do not have personal protective equipment. The employees, as well, do not have masks or goggles. We have always provided gloves to our employees, but our regular shipments are not being delivered due to being out of stock and we are down to a very small supply. When the people we support and/or their coaches fall ill, the virus will spread to the others on the team if we do not get the proper safety measures in place.

Finally, I thank our wonderful staff and those who have dedicated themselves to supporting people through this pandemic. We will get through this, but the people we support and their families would be facing a nearly impossible task without our Avenues SLS Instructional Coaches!

Blessings,

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