

COVID-19 & THE I/DD COMMUNITY WEEKLY VIRTUAL TOWN HALL NOTES APRIL 1, 2020

SPECIAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE

Alissa Trollinger with ADE-ESS

Exceptional Student services tasked with ensuring IDEA is implemented with fidelity at the local level, district and school level. Our goal is to ensure IDEA funding is implemented properly by schools receiving them. Some make the assumption we provide special education to students directly. We do not. We are working with OSEP, the federal oversight body that tells us what to do with IDEA in the face of this pandemic. Since there is no caveat for pandemic, we're in a grey area. So, we must wait for guidance.

There was a Supplemental Fact Sheet Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 disseminated March 21. The purpose for that was to address the states that were concerned about not being able to provide SPED services in a way fully consistent with IEP and leave schools open to liability. Free and public education should be given to special education students, but encourage flexibility. Use computer, internet, phone. Instructional packets sent home. Written assignments.

Amanda Glass with ACDL

Best ways to advocate for children. Try to get as many services as possible. A lot of students not willing to sit in front of computer to do a zoom session. Not going to happen. Try, but when services not provided, its important compensatory services are provided. Parents keep track of what is and isn't provided. Ask for an IEP meeting with the school. Ask for a meeting when schools reopen. What is the effect on my child? What can I ask for to lessen the impact as much as possible? Come up with solution to bring children as close as possible to where they should be had the pandemic not happened.

Questions from the group posted on our FAQ page.

OTHER ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Issues with Group Home Services

- *Lack of Guidance & Training to Take Care of Infected Members:* Lack of guidance on how to protect individuals with higher risk or who are infected. Isolation difficult for people with complex conditions and who are living with families who are untrained.
- *Lack of Planning and Supplies:* If a roommate or staff comes down with illness, there are no guidelines or supplies offered to group homes. No quarantine plans. No masks. My son's home went four days without antibacterial soap.

- *Lack of staff:* Daughter sent home from group home due to lack of staff. **DDD states to contact your support coordinator if you are being sent home.**
- *Needs:* Webinar to help address proper training for staff to deal with all that is happening. Use of PPE Equipment, behavioral intervention due to being cooped up that may occur, etc, education on emergency plans and how to address an emergency should one occur, etc.

Staff Shortages

- Large funding concern for direct support professionals salary when we are open for those needing day care when families cannot care for at home due to their being first responders or essential staff
- We need to be incentivizing staff by offering hazard pay for them to continue to come to work. Right now we have mostly incentive programs to stay home as the focus and we need to create awareness that our care providers are necessary and we need them to come to work
- At Raising Special Kids we know some families are continuing to have their Nurse come to work when the nurse has a good relationship with the family and is not caring for any other patients. Some families have older siblings that are providing Respite. That being said, there are many families that have cancelled home based services and are really struggling w/o the services and support they typically get.
- Parents out of work. Maybe temporarily have family work for a vendor and put aside fingerprint check and training so group home can access as a resource.
- Want to see more support coordinators approving hours for parents as providers.
- Status unknown of parents of children 17 and under being approved for provider services.
- I'm in process of becoming certified through agency here in Tucson. Only thing holding back the process is to take the Article 9 class. **Article 9 can now be taken online.** I took a long time ago and need to update. Once done, I'll be put on pay roll so I can stay home and earn a paycheck. All being done through DDD and my support coordinator. They are great source of information.

Family Caregiving Issues

- Some parents need to stay home to take care of their adult children with disabilities but are given a hard time because they want to use FMLA to stay home. They are afraid of losing their jobs.

Abuse & Neglect

- Due to sheltering in place, some victims of domestic violence may be sequestered with their abusers and not able to leave their homes.

Must keep talking and thinking outside the box and putting our ideas out there. We just must keep talking and working together. It's hard and overwhelming but don't feel as quite overwhelmed like last week.

Adult Developmental Homes & Group Homes discussed next week. DDD to attend.