**Allegheny County
Department *of*
Human Services**

Allegheny County Department of Human Services Helpful Resources

Strategies to Support Clients During the COVID-19 Restrictions

1. Programs should assess clients' need for technology, to include phones, computer/tablets, and internet access, as well as clients' learning needs related to virtual engagement. If clients' lack the necessary technology to engage in tele-services, programs may fill out the "DHS COVID-19 Client Laptop Requests" form. Requests will be filled based on the following process and as supply and funding allow:

   - Requestor fills out form: https://bit.ly/DHS COVID19 Form
   - DHS validates Client information and need
   - DHS contacts requestor to arrange for pickup at HSB or to make other arrangements

2. Program staff should ensure that clients have continued access to basic needs such as food and medication, especially in cases where clients are more vulnerable or are restricted to home due to COVID-19.

3. To the extent possible, programs should work with individuals' health care providers to institute telemedicine appointments. Behavioral health treatment teams should consider increased frequency of engagement, including therapy, using alternatives to in-person meetings. Treatment providers are expected to maintain minimal staffing available either on site or on call to address any treatment needs that cannot be met using telemedicine.

4. In lieu of in-person visits, programs should consider:

   - Offering alternate means of communication for people who would otherwise visit, such as virtual communications (phone, video communication, etc.).
   - Creating/increasing listserv communication to update families, such as advising not to visit.
   - Assigning staff as primary contact to families for inbound calls and conduct regular outbound calls to keep families up to date.
   - Offering a phone line with a voice recording updated at set times (e.g., daily) with the program's general operating status, including when it is safe to resume visits.

5. Enhance social connectedness and maintain meaningful activity while maintaining physical distancing
   - Support and facilitate communication with natural supports using telephone, text, video, and/or social media.
   - Utilize peer supports through virtual communications.
   - In lieu of group activities in a common area, consider offering leisure time activities for individuals to engage in while isolated in their rooms (e.g., coloring, crafting, journaling, letter writing)
   - [Resources](#) from the Corporation for Supportive Housing offer tools and suggestions that can be used or adapted for use in programs.
6. Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to staff, volunteers, and those you serve. Learn more about [reaching people of diverse languages and cultures](#).
   - Provide regular updates to clients about COVID-19 protocols
   - Consult the health department's rumor control [webpage](#) for information on dispelling rumors related to the coronavirus; report any misinformation, unsubstantiated rumors, or questions of authenticity to web.comm@alleghenycounty.us.