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Florida Department of Education (FDOE) – Division of Blind Services (DBS) Question & Answer Guidance for Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)

The purpose of this question and answer document is to help the Department’s Community Rehabilitation Providers ensure that all clients served by the Division of Blind Services have the opportunity to continue their education and training.

1. **Q: Can Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) obtain approval to conduct and complete intakes/assessments over the phone during this period?**

A: Intake and Assessments may be completed over the phone, via Skype or other electronic format conducive to each CRP. Electronic signatures will be accepted by a means conducive to each CRP. Email submission of acceptance and understanding will also be accepted.

2. **Q: Can we eliminate the need for hard copy signatures due to the inability to sterilize paper, and the transference of germs from pens and signature guides?**

A: Electronic signatures will be accepted by a means conducive to each CRP. Email submission of acceptance and understanding will also be accepted. [Please consult Florida Statutes chapter 668.50 for guidance, definitions, and additional information.](#)

3. **Q: Can CRPs have an emergency contract amendment that suspends performance metrics, deadlines and penalties until COVID-19 related impacts are mitigated and under control?**

A: DOE/DBS will not be issuing an emergency amendment or any other type of amendment to contracts for services, at this time. CRPs are to work within the guidelines of the State and County in which they reside.

Because of the COVID-19 emergency, DOE/DBS will not be imposing financial consequences under CRP contracts for the months of March or April 2020, when services are provided in accordance with the guidelines of this memo and subsequent notifications by the Department.

4. Q: Is there anything specific that CRPs must do to have financial consequences waived for March and April 2020

A: CRPs should submit a request, with a plan for delivering services, during the current COVID-19 crisis timeframe. Plans should include methods to deliver services through virtual and online methods, to the extent possible with adherence to Florida Department of Health (FDOH), county and city guidelines. CRPs' plans should also include assurances that the CRP will monitor and comply with the [CDC's guidance for higher-risk populations](#) by cancelling any mass gatherings, community events, and extracurricular activities of more than 10 people in a single occupied space at any facility. CRPs' plans must also build out and operationalize instructional continuity and document updates to emergency protocols.

CRPs are required to document service delivery in the AWARE CMS for client inactivity as outlined in the contract. AWARE documentation will provide DBS the information needed to verify closures and cancelled services (by the CRP or by client) and verify minimum weekly updates on each client's well-being.

Plan approvals would initially extend through April 30, 2020, with evaluation of other extensions based on external factors related to COVID-19.

5. Q: Are there general recommendations about how education should be provided and documented during this time?

A: CRPs must maximize the use of distance instruction through April 30, 2020. We will revisit and reevaluate every 15 days, [in accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and direction from FDOH.

For all onsite assessments, classes, individual services, and remote services, group events, etc. that have been scheduled and subsequently are cancelled due to the COVID-19, please follow the instruction in Attachment A, (E.) Role of the Contractor, section 8.vi.2, to document inactivity of client services for each identified client. CRPs will be required to document and attach communications in AWARE to document cancellation of services, group meetings and events for all active clients.

CRPs will be asked to follow up with active clients via a mode of communication conducive to each client's needs at least weekly and make appropriate recommendations as necessary and to update the client on the current status of the CRP status of operations. This information should also be documented in AWARE.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact the Division of Blind Services at 850-245-0300.