

COVID-19 Return to Employment and Community Inclusion Services: Guidelines

Purpose: To assist Employment/Community Inclusion and residential providers in determining a safe plan for a client to return to community-based services.

Include the following individuals in discussions and planning efforts, as applicable:

- Client
- Guardian/Legal Representative
- Residential Staff
- Employment or Community Inclusion Support Staff/County Coordinator
- DDA Case Manager
- Others as identified by the client (employer, coworkers, friends, etc.)

Consider the client's level of interest and concerns with restarting Employment or Community Inclusion services:

- Ask the client –
 - What are their thoughts about returning to work or Community Inclusion activities?
 - What are they looking forward to when returning to work or Community Inclusion activities?
 - What are they worried about when returning to work or Community Inclusion activities?

If the client is not interested or ready to return to Employment or Community Inclusion services at this time, develop a follow-up plan and timeline. Questions to consider: What discussions or planning efforts with the client and support team are needed to move forward? Is there a target related to vaccination or case count? Also consider remote/virtual services or meeting outdoors in the backyard or public space.

Client risk considerations:

- A medical or mental health professional has assessed the client's health risk and made recommendations regarding the client returning to work or activity.
- General health status – including any underlying medical conditions.
- Social isolation may result in mental health issues and subsequent skill loss.
- Risk of losing their job if the client does not resume work or risk of losing volunteer opportunity if client does not resume Community Inclusion services.
- Dependency on the income.
- Impact of working/not working on other benefits.
- Physical distancing.
- Available appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) from the employer or at the

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Community Inclusion site.

Home risk considerations:

- Household established protocols for living with COVID-19 comply with [Safe Start Recommendations and Requirements: Certified Community Residential Services and Support](#), DOH Guidelines and related [Safe Start Precautions](#).
 - Determine how to reduce the impact to other housemates and what can be done to lessen that impact. *Please be mindful of the protection of personal health information during these discussions.*
 - Develop plans in the event the client or another household member becomes symptomatic or ill with COVID-19.
- Acknowledge and address as appropriate concerns from housemates or housemates' guardians about the client's return to work and develop a plan to address these concerns.

Supports needed to follow safety precautions:

- [Safe Start plans and guidance for reopening on precautions.](#)
- DSHS' Residential Care Services' [Safe Start Recommendations and Requirements: Certified Community Residential Services and Support](#) such as:
 - Wearing face covering
 - Wearing gloves
 - Handwashing
 - Using non-toxic hand sanitizer
 - Limiting touching surfaces
 - Social distancing
- Required return to work training and any additional training and/or follow-up plan for a safe return to work.
- Required return to Community Inclusion activity training if the client is in a volunteer position or at a site that requires training and/or a follow-up plan for a safe return to Community Inclusion services.
- Determine if close contact from employment support staff or co-workers is needed to complete work tasks and develop a safety plan if necessary.
- Determine if close contact from Community Inclusion staff or other individuals at Community Inclusion site is needed to complete volunteer task or participate in the activity and develop a safety plan if necessary.

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Vaccination considerations:

- [Washington Labor & Industries COVID-19 Vaccines Common Questions](#)
- [Washington State COVID-19 Disability Guidance](#)
- [Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidance on COVID-19](#)
- [CDC Workplace Vaccination Program guidance, section on Vaccine Mandates and Exemptions](#)
- Does the employer or Community Inclusion site require vaccination?
- If it is likely the client will interact with individuals who are not vaccinated at their work or Community Inclusion site, a safety plan should be developed in alignment with the [Safe Start Recommendations and Requirements: Certified Community Residential Services and Support](#).
- Encourage Employment and Community Inclusion providers to share infectious disease prevention efforts their agency is practicing (e.g. masking, social distancing, vaccination policy).

Employer specific guidelines for safety considerations:

For each location, consider the employer's COVID-19 safety plans, DOH and L&I guidelines and related risk-of-exposure in the working environment.

- Location, nature of the business and nature of the client's job within the workplace.
- Approximate size of location/business, number of employees and other persons typically in the client's workspace.
- Indoor/outdoor location and ability to modify workspace if needed.
- Types of interactions with other people- general public or familiar group of people.
- Written employer COVID-19 safety plans or guidelines.
- Written employer COVID-19 vaccine policy, if applicable.
- Number of times per week client is at the workplace and duration per work shift.

Community Inclusion specific guidelines for safety considerations:

For each Community Inclusion site, consider the site's COVID-19 safety plans, DOH guidelines and related risk-of-exposure at the site.

- Location, nature of the site and nature of the client's role or participation within the site.
- Approximate size of site, number of persons the client typically interacts with at the Community Inclusion site.
- Written COVID-19 safety plans or guidelines at the client's activity site, if applicable.

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- Written COVID-19 vaccine policy for the Community Inclusion site, if applicable.
- Number of times per week the client is at the Community Inclusion site and duration of time.
- Do the activities and/or sites vary?

Health status at home prior to work considerations:

Discuss how the client or staff will monitor health status before leaving home to access community environments including the following information:

- Client does not currently have COVID-19.
- Client is not sick and has not used medication to control symptoms of COVID-19 ([CDC Symptoms](#): fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea).
- If exposed follow Residential Care Services' [Safe Start Recommendations and Requirements: Certified Community Residential Services and Support](#).
- Plan for COVID-19 testing as necessary.

Transportation considerations:

- Number of individuals traveling in a vehicle
- Is travel with household members or paid support staff?
- Is the vehicle being used for other individuals? If so, is it cleaned between users?
- Ability to maintain maximum physical distance.
- Ability to open windows.
- Length of travel time.
- Ability of client and others to adhere to safety precautions (physical distance, use of masks, limiting touching of surfaces, etc.).
- Does the client use public transportation?
- Use of PPE or well-fitting cloth mask or face mask and sanitization practices .

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Protection measures for returning home considerations:

- Practices the client can exercise when returning home each day to decrease the risk of exposing other household members:
 - washing hands
 - showering
 - changing clothes
 - washing face covering
 - wearing covering
 - physical distancing
 - taking temperature
- If an exposure occurs follow the Residential Care Services' [Safe Start Recommendations and Requirements: Certified Community Residential Services and Support](#).
- Discuss contingency plans and communication protocols should a client choose not to follow protection measures to keep other clients and residential staff in the home safe.