**Considerations From Other Directors Managing COVID-19**

**3.29.20**

As this is a very fluid situation, ideas are ever changing, but here are some ideas for your consideration as you are managing in the world with a pandemic.

1. **Decision-Making Principles to Guide You**

* Support flexible service delivery and use of funding where it is reasonable and viable to maximizing serving consumers.
* Support flexible staff work schedules where it is reasonable and viable to maximize serving consumers.
* Where you need to exercise judgment, where reasonable and viable, error on the side of supporting the employee.

1. **Communication**
   1. Communication needs to be transparent, timely, and cover all stakeholders. This is not indicative of order of importance, but rather a list and all need to be addressed simultaneously.

* Leadership team
* Managers –Supervisors
* All Staff
* Providers, CRPs, Vendors
* Customers
  1. Possible methods of communication
* Website—check out [www.dor.ca.gov](http://www.dor.ca.gov) for a good example
  + Develop a webpage dedicated to COVID-19 and have a link prominently placed on your website. On that page you will link to the following:
    - Notice from the Director
    - Links to COVID-19 Resources from the CDC
    - Develop FAQs for consumers and providers-address things like office closures, how should consumers connect with their counselors, how will you handle intakes, can providers be paid for providing remote training, etc.
    - Have a staff only section that can include telework information
  + Dedicate an email address for all questions and post the link
* Email
  + Design messaging so that each group is fully informed about the topic.
  + Have a mechanism for staff to submit their questions and then a forum for you to supply answers.
* Phone/Webex, Zoom or other technology
  + Find a way to talk with all your staff so they can hear your voice in a shared meeting. Answer questions they have submitted ahead of time and give clear instruction on decisions you have made and what lies ahead.
  + Items that could be addressed in messaging to staff.
    - Thank staff. Thank staff. Thank staff.
    - Acknowledge to staff that these are unprecedented times-things are changing by the minute-there is a lack of predictability and that amps up fears and concerns. None of us has all the answers but we will do our best to get you information as it becomes known.
    - The issue before us is a public health matter.
    - In times of uncertainty it is especially important to be our best selves. Recommend washing hands, cover cough, practice social distance, and stay home if home.
    - Tell staff to take care of themselves both physically and mentally.
    - Talk about the decision making you are using as you are working through this situation (refer to #1)
    - Stay at home orders-objective is to create social distancing to slow transmission. This includes telework, use telephone and video for engagements, work place spacing, reducing and eliminating group gatherings. Government services have been deemed essential services.
    - Talk about the guidance coming from the Federal level, State level, and community level throughout the state.
    - Acknowledge the work of people throughout the team and list some positive happenings.
    - Talk about the essential functions that will continue to be performed as you carry out your mission.
    - Discuss the staffing plan. If staff are being redeployed to help carry out work in another agency deemed critical does not mean that staff and their work are not valued. These are unprecedented times that are requiring some unprecedented measures.
    - Discuss administrative time off and whatever your state has deemed for those state employees that must stay at home.
    - Talk about the telework, flexible scheduling and how decisions are being made.
    - Since this is a fluid situation, standardization and consistency may be difficult given varied geography-rural and urban, small office and large offices, etc. It is requiring people to exercise using the best judgment to address individual needs throughout your state.
    - Ask the questions what do we need to know that we may not know? What are you facing that we need to be aware of?
  + Hold a meeting with all your providers to discuss your plans and answer questions they may have. Record the meeting and post a transcript on your website for people to reference later.

1. **Deal with both response and planning simultaneously**

* This is tricky as you are handling both the daily responses to all stakeholders and needing to plan for the next steps.
* You need to find a way to organize yourself and capture those thoughts you have to be addressed at a later time.

1. **Think about what you need from RSA (some examples)**

* Waivers to support flexible service delivery and the use of funding where it is reasonable and viable to maximize services to consumers.
* Consideration of program performance expectations arising from this unprecedented impact on the ability of individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.
* Retainer payments to preserve and ensure the sustainability of future network capacity to serve, such as community resource programs which are at risk of going out of businesses in the current environment.

1. **Telework**
   1. Figure out what duties/functions can be performed remotely.
   2. Restructure work to support telework rotation.
   3. Look at professional development and training options staff can access during this time.
   4. Address staff telework concerns—fair might not be equal. Assignments made based on geographic needs and program needs.
2. **Self-Care**
   1. Check in with your management team and staff to make sure everyone is ensuring self-care with each other.
   2. Don’t forget about the Employee Assistance Program and messaging all staff with that resource.