

## Direct Care Shortages and Rationing of Care During the COVID-19 Epidemic

March 30, 2020

Agencies and organizations statewide are working together to limit the COVID-19 impact on Louisianans. The Council is grateful for the responsiveness of Governor Edwards, his staff and the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) during this unprecedented national public health emergency.

Currently there are two major COVID-19 issues being discussed that impact people with developmental disabilities:

- Shortages of direct support professionals (DSPs)
- Rationing of healthcare workers and/or equipment during shortages

### Direct Care Shortages

The COVID-19 crisis is expected to intensify an ongoing issue faced by individuals and families daily: the shortage of DSPs. Individuals are concerned that supports may be interrupted should they or their DSP show symptoms of COVID-19 or fear getting it. As reported in the LaDDC News [COVID-19 Exemptions for I/DD HCBS Waiver](#), LDH received permission for increased flexibility regarding how services can be provided and, subsequently, LDH's Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) released [clarification on exemptions to waiver services](#).

A complete list of OCDD's COVID-19 memos can be found on the [OCDD COVID-19 Information website](#).

NOTE: It is important to remember DSPs are essential health care workers who are exempt from the stay-at-home order issued by Governor Edwards. Consider printing the LDH memo for [Authorized Travel for Essential Direct Support Workers](#) for your DSP.

If you have questions, please reach out to your [regional Families Helping Families Center](#) or contact OCDD directly at [OCDD-HCBS@la.gov](mailto:OCDD-HCBS@la.gov).

### Rationing of Care

"Rationing of care," the decision of who receives care during resource shortages, has become a growing concern. The question has been raised: Will people with developmental disabilities have equal access to health care if the number of COVID-19 cases requiring medical equipment, such as ventilators, exceed the capacity of healthcare workers and/or equipment?

[The Council joined other organizations, led by the Disability Rights Louisiana, in requesting guidance be provided to hospitals and healthcare workers regarding the importance of valuing all lives, including the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities, chromosomal abnormalities, or other severe disabilities.](#) Governor Edwards' staff and LDH personnel have been receptive to these requests to communicate the message of *not* using a patient's disability as a reason to withhold life-sustaining healthcare during times of rationing of care.

## Contact Us

LaDDC News is the electronic newsletter for the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information above, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

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