



Human Service Transportation 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance

May 20, 2020

Intended Audience: Transportation brokers, vendors, drivers, and monitors

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Under the guidance of the Governor's COVID-19 Response Command Center, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health is working closely with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide updated information about the novel coronavirus outbreak.

This guidance will be updated as needed and as additional information is available. Please regularly check [mass.gov/covid19](https://www.mass.gov/covid19) for updated interim guidance. Guidance can and does change as more information becomes available.

Each organization faces specific challenges associated with implementation based on its population, physical space, driver and/or monitoring, etc., and will need to tailor these guidelines accordingly. **This guidance is intended to supplement, not supplant, provisions from regulatory agencies that oversee transportation organizations.** Organizations may develop their own policies, but these policies should be based on current science and facts and they should never compromise a consumer's or employee's health.

Background

What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and how does it spread?

- COVID-19 is a respiratory virus.
- Current symptoms have included mild to severe respiratory illness with:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Difficulty breathing
- Other symptoms may include aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of smell or taste, chills, headache, abdominal pain, or vomiting.
- Symptoms may appear two-14 days after exposure.
- People may be currently asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic and still have the virus.
- The virus is spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with each other (within about six feet).
- Spread is from respiratory droplets produced when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes.
- Spread can be prevented by washing your hands frequently with soap and warm water for around 20 seconds and avoiding touching your face, nose, eyes, and mouth.

Who should be most cautious?

- Those considered "high risk" include people older than age 60, anyone with underlying health conditions or a weakened immune system, and pregnant women.
- Even those not considered "high risk" should take appropriate precautions to limit contact and exposure, as serious illness or death is not limited to those at highest risk. In addition, the healthy well, or those who may have the virus but are asymptomatic, can expose those at high risk to the illness if they don't take proper precautions.

What should organizations be doing to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19?

- **Screen your employees, drivers and/or monitors, vendors, and consumers for any of the conditions below:**
 - Sick with fever (100.0° F or higher) or newly developed respiratory illness such as cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat
 - Close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days
- **Preparing and educating the driver and/or monitor**
 - Especially during times of COVID-19 circulation in the community, ensure employees can stay home if they have symptoms of acute respiratory illness or if they need to care for a sick family member.
 - Make sure your employees are aware of these policies. Do not require a healthcare provider's note to validate illness or return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide this documentation.
 - If employees become ill with respiratory symptoms while at work, they should be sent home as soon as possible. Follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).
 - Make sure your employees are aware of these policies. Sick persons should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or cough into their elbow or shoulder if tissues are not available) and perform hand hygiene immediately after.
 - Those with symptoms of respiratory illness should stay home. After recovering from illness, employees should only return to work consistent with the [guidance from DPH](#).
- **Identify ways to limit direct person-to-person contact by leveraging technology, where appropriate.**
 - Allow call center and administrative staff to work from home, if possible.
- **Follow recommendations concerning contact with consumers and facial coverings**
 - Drivers and monitors are required to wear masks or face coverings.
 - Consumers are required to wear masks or face coverings, except if unable to wear a mask or face covering due to a medical condition or otherwise exempted by [Department of Public Health Guidance](#). A consumer who declines to wear a mask or face covering because of a medical condition may not be required to provide documentation verifying the condition. See [COVID-19 Order Number 31](#). Children younger than the age of two years should not wear face coverings or masks. Mask use by children two years of age and up to the age of five is encouraged but should be at the discretion of the child's parent or guardian. [Exceptions](#) for wearing face coverings include situations that may inhibit a consumer from wearing a face covering safely. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - Those who cannot breathe safely;
 - Those who, due to a behavioral health diagnosis, are unable to do so;
 - Those communicating with people who rely upon lip-reading; and
 - Those who require supplemental oxygen to breathe.
 - If a consumer is unable to wear a face covering or mask due to a medical or behavioral condition or other exemption, transportation must still be provided. Transportation may only be denied if a consumer refuses to wear a face covering or mask and the vendor has confirmed that no exemption applies. The vendor must accept a consumer's statement that an exemption applies and may not require documentation verifying the condition or make his or her own judgment that an exemption does not apply.
 - If transportation is denied pursuant to the previous paragraph, the vendor must document the denial, including a notation that the vendor specifically asked the consumer if an exemption applied and that no exemption did in fact apply. The vendor must inform the broker, and the broker must inform the HST office. Payment will not be available to the broker when the vendor denies transportation.
 - Providers should make every available effort, in partnership with their respective organizations and associations, to obtain PPE through their supply chains.
- **Avoid unnecessary travel and avoid large gatherings or crowds.**
 - Drivers and monitors provide essential services that help others access medical care. Driver and monitor health and the health of those you serve is of utmost importance.
 - Avoid unnecessary travel and practice social distancing.
 - Cancel and do not attend gatherings of more than 10 people. See [COVID 19 Order No. 13](#).

- **Reinforce the practice of good daily hygiene with all staff, drivers and monitors.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially:
 - After going to the bathroom;
 - Before eating;
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing;
 - Upon entering and exiting the consumer’s home; and
 - Touching or manipulating your facemask
 - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of tissue.
 - Don’t touch your eyes, nose or mouth without first carefully and fully washing your hands.
 - Properly clean all frequently touched surfaces on a regular basis consistent with [CDC guidance on cleaning and disinfection for non-emergency transport vehicles](#), including the use of appropriate disinfectants. Cleaning should occur at a minimum at the beginning and end of each shift and after transporting passengers who are visibly sick.
 - Use gloves if required to touch surfaces contaminated by body fluids.
 - Stay away from people who are sick and stay home when you feel sick.

- **Staff emotional health.**
 - Emotional reactions to stressful situations such as new viruses are expected. Remind staff, drivers and monitors that feeling sad, anxious, overwhelmed, or having trouble sleeping, or other symptoms of distress is normal.
 - If symptoms become worse, last longer than a month, or if they struggle to participate in their usual daily activities, have them reach out for support and help.
 - If one is available, encourage employees to call their Employee Assistance Program. The National Disaster Distress Helpline is available with 24/7 emotional support and crisis counseling for anyone experiencing distress or other mental health concerns. Calls ((800) 985-5990) and texts (text TalkWithUs to 66746) are answered by trained counselors who will listen to your concerns, explore coping and other available supports, and offer referrals to community resources for follow-up transportation and support.

- **Complete the Coronavirus COVID-19 Broker and Transportation Provider Checklist Tool on pages 6-8.**

- **Organizational preparedness.** These preparedness steps may help protect your agency while minimizing disruption to your important services.
 - Develop or review business continuity plans for how to keep critical services going if staff, drivers and/or monitors attendance levels drop due to illness or taking care of ill family members or children that may be temporarily out of childcare or school settings.
 - Be prepared to change your practices as needed to maintain critical operations.
 - You may also wish to refer to [CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).
 - Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so the site can operate even if key staff, drivers and/or monitors are absent.
 - Assure you have adequate supplies of soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizers, cleaning supplies, and garbage bags. If possible, a supply of PPE will be useful if persons become ill while at your work site.

Steps to follow if driver and/or monitor, or someone they provide transportation for is sick:

- **If driver and/or monitor are sick:**
 - They should stay home and not come to work. Do not schedule them to work if they are sick.
 - Follow the steps outlined on page 9.

- **Follow the flow chart on page 9 to determine the best transportation path for consumers diagnosed with COVID-19 or experiencing symptoms.**
 - Rides should be assigned to designated vendors with drivers who have a signed agreement of understanding on file and who have been provided PPE.

- Drivers should exercise [Transmission-Based Precautions](#) to the extent possible.
- Cleaning and disinfection of vehicles should occur consistent with [CDC guidance](#) after the transportation of any individual who is sick, including the use of appropriate disinfectants.
- Passengers diagnosed with COVID-19 who have fully recovered and been released from isolation may be transported by any driver. Drivers should take usual precautions as they would for any passenger. Current [CDC guidance for discontinuance of Transmission-Based Precautions](#) indicates that this decision should be made on a case by case basis and includes meeting various requirements relating to being free from fever or symptoms, including cough, for varying time periods depending on the patient's particular situation.

Coronavirus COVID-19 Broker and Transportation Provider Checklist

ACTION	YES	NO	COMPLETION DATE	COMMENTS
PLAN				
1. Review your Emergency Plan/Continuity of Operations Plan.				
2. Update your Plan to reflect changes based on your review and current situation.				
3. Update all workforce contact information.				
4. Coordinate with local emergency operations/ local health department/health care coalition.				
5. Review personnel policies with regard to use of personal time, sick time, overtime. Develop contingency policies.				
6. Check with your vendors about supply chain especially those that provide you with supplies for your operations.				
7. Plan to address workforce shortages. Contract with other vendors or agencies for additional workforce.				
8. Develop a plan to cross train workforce wherever possible.				
9. Develop a questionnaire to identify which workforce members are available to work extra and flexible hours. Also identify workforce members that may be employed by another health transportation provider as they may have a commitment to that organization in an emergent situation.				

Coronavirus COVID-19 Broker and Transportation Provider Checklist

ACTION	YES	NO	COMPLETION DATE	COMMENTS
10. Communicate your plan with partner agencies.				
11. Help your workforce develop a plan for their families.				
CONSUMER TRANSPORTATION				
1. Assess your Consumer Classification Levels for possible triage and keep hard copy easily accessible. Do this with every consumer who calls to request transportation while we are in this current situation.				
2. Develop Back Up Transportation Plans.				
a. List names and responsibilities.				
b. Get governing authority approval.				
3. Begin to develop plans for possible surge capacity based on driver and/or monitoring and consumer classification levels. This means forecasting with a possible significantly reduced workforce.				
4. Develop alternate call taker, driver and monitor schedules, such as longer days.				
5. Ask screening questions when transportation is scheduled and identify responsible person for conducting screening (scheduler, supervisor, call taker, etc.) as described in the Flow Chart on page 9.				
6. Develop plan for transporting individuals with known or suspected COVID-19.				

Coronavirus COVID-19 Broker and Transportation Provider Checklist Tool

ACTION	YES	NO	COMPLETION DATE	COMMENTS
SITUATIONAL AWARENESS				
1. Communicate with local emergency preparedness organizations.				
2. Assign one person to monitor daily updates from CDC, DPH, and World Health organization.				
3. Be aware of state updates, resources and communications.				
INFECTION CONTROL AND PREVENTION				
1. Educate/re-educate workforce in the following:				
a. Standard Precaution				
b. Transmission- based precautions such as				
1) contact				
2) droplet				
c. Facial coverings				
2. Re-educate workforce on handwashing protocols using running water and waterless hand sanitizers.				
3. Have a process to monitor and report any workforce or consumer illnesses in your organization.				
4. Develop an occupational health plan and policies for any workforce members with an exposure to COVID-19.				
5. Educate workforce around cleaning and disinfection consistent with CDC guidance for non-emergency transport vehicles , including disinfection after transportation of sick consumers.				

Broker & Transportation Providers Screening Flow Chart

Start Here

