Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Office of Medicaid
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Day Habilitation Bulletin 34

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TO: Day Habilitation Providers Participating in MassHealth

FROM: Ryan Schwarz, Assistant Secretary for MassHealth

RE: **Day Habilitation Services Safety Guidelines**

Introduction

Regulation 130 CMR 419.000: *Day Habilitation Center Services* governs the requirements for Day Habilitation (DH) services. DH programs provide individualized, integrated, and goal-oriented services designed to maximize the independence of individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DDs). The revised regulation updates physical site requirements and compliance for providers to be able to operate DH programs on floors other than ground level.

Day Habilitation (DH) Services Safety Guidelines

Compliance with Day Habilitation Services Safety Guidelines, under 130 CMR 419.432(B)(3)(b), is required for any DH service location where any portion of the site is not on ground level. These guidelines require additional documentation to be provided during the enrollment or expansion of a DH service location. Requirements include, but are not limited to:

1. Two means of accessible egress from each floor
2. Additional written evacuation safety plans

The DH Services Safety Guidelines, attached to this bulletin, include detailed information regarding these requirements.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)

Day Habilitation Services Safety Guidelines

October 2026

Introduction

Providers running Day Habilitation (DH) services on floors other than the ground level must comply with additional requirements to ensure member safety and provide appropriate and accessible egress from each floor.

MassHealth requires DH provider agencies to develop and maintain a written evacuation safety plan for each service site where DH services are delivered on floors other than ground level. Provider agencies must submit a preliminary evacuation safety plan when enrolling and then maintain an updated evacuation safety plan that reflects the needs and capabilities of the members being served as well as any relevant changes to staffing and/or membership.

These guidelines outline the physical plant requirements for applicable service sites and provide instructions for completing the Evacuation Safety Plan. All requirements align with 130 CMR 419.000: Day Habilitation Center Services.

Physical Plant Requirements

Provider agencies operating on floors other than ground level must have a minimum of two means of accessible egress from each floor.

Accessible Egress. Accessible egress provides a continuous, unobstructed path from any point in a building to a public way for people with disabilities. The path must meet specific criteria for width, travel distance, and signage to comply with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards and DH safety guidelines.

On floors above or below the ground level exit, an accessible means of egress must lead to exit stairways, horizontal exits, or elevators equipped with standby power. For buildings *not* equipped with a supervised fire suppression sprinkler system, area(s) of refuge must also be provided. These areas of refuge must provide direct access to exit stairways and can be located adjacent to stairway enclosures or on stair landings.

Area of Refuge. An area of refuge is a designated, fire-rated, and smoke-protected space where people who cannot use stairs (such as wheelchair users or individuals with mobility impairments) can safely wait for assistance or rescue during an emergency evacuation. It is standard operating procedure for emergency responders to check these locations first for anyone needing assistance.

Provider agencies must clearly identify each accessible means of egress and, if applicable, area of refuge in their overall Safety Evacuation Plan. The plan will need to be submitted to MassHealth or its designee upon submission of an application for enrollment as a DH provider.

Evacuation Safety Plan Requirements

Evacuation Safety Plan. An evacuation safety plan is a formal, detailed, written strategy outlining procedures for safely exiting a building or area during emergencies, like fires or natural disasters. The plan must detail accessible egress routes and multiple evacuation options for all individuals, including those with mobility limitations.

Safe evacuation means all individuals can evacuate in a safe, orderly, and timely manner, with staff assigned to individuals requiring assistance. Evacuation timing begins the moment the alarm is activated and ends when the last individual has crossed the threshold of the designated egress. While there is no specific statewide evacuation time requirement, each provider must establish a site-specific expected evacuation time.

Evacuation safety plans must accurately account for the needs and capabilities of the population being served, staffing details to support evacuation, environmental features or necessary environmental adaptations, as well as clear procedures.

At a minimum the evacuation safety plan should include the following.

1. *Staffing Ratios*: Identify minimum staffing levels needed for safe evacuation, including staffing for individuals who require two-person assistance.
2. *Evacuation Time:* Enter the total time required to evacuate all individuals (from alarm to final exit).
3. *Evacuation Procedures and Staff Roles:*
    a. Describe the overall order in which individuals will be evacuated.
    b. Identify staff responsibilities and assignments, including coordination of adaptive equipment and modifications to be made to evacuation procedures in the instance of inaccessible or blocked egress.
4. *Escape Routes:*
    a. Primary Exit Routes
        i. Identify the primary exit routes.
        ii. Identify the equipment and training required to utilize the primary exit routes.
        iii. Confirm that primary exit routes have been tested and are accessible.
        iv. Describe the plan for using primary exit routes, including:
            1. Staff training for complex evacuations (e.g., stairwells, evacu-chair use).
            2. Considerations for two-person assists, longer evacuation times, or safety risks.
    b. Secondary Exit Routes
        i. Identify alternate exit(s) if the primary route is blocked.
        ii. Identify the equipment and training required to utilize the alternate exit routes.
        iii. Confirm that alternate exit routes have been tested and are accessible.
        iv. Describe the plan for using alternate exit routes, including:

1. Staff training for complex evacuations (e.g., stairwells, evacu-chair use).
2. Considerations for two-person assists, longer evacuation time, or safety risks.

5. *Central Meeting Location:*
    a. Identify the location of the central meeting place.
    b. Explain the method that will be used to confirm that all members in attendance are accounted for.

Preliminary Evacuation Safety Plan. As several components of the comprehensive evacuation safety plan require membership information that may not be immediately available, providers must create a preliminary evacuation safety plan upon program enrollment. The preliminary evacuation safety plan must include components 3b (Staff Responsibilities), 4 (Escape Routes) and 5 (Central Meeting Location) from this document.

Submission of Evacuation Safety Plan

As part of the application process for enrollment into MassHealth as a DH Services provider, the prospective provider must submit a preliminary evacuation safety plan. This is as an additional required document for each service site where DH services are delivered on floors other than ground level. Upon enrollment of new members, discharge of current members, or changes in staffing, the evacuation safety plan must be updated and made available to MassHealth or its designee upon request.