

March 9, 2020

Good afternoon,

I know this is a challenging time for you as our state faces Coronavirus Disease 2019, also called COVID-19. You are on the frontlines, working with our state's most vulnerable citizens every day, often going into people's homes to provide services. All of us at APD are here to support you in maintaining the health and safety of the people we serve. Please take a few minutes to read the information below about COVID-19 and how you can protect yourself so that you may help others.

As you know, Governor Ron DeSantis has issued [Executive Order 20-51](#) directing a Public Health Emergency and statewide response protocol for COVID-19. COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Fever, cough, and shortness of breath are some of the symptoms.

We all must remain diligent and have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of our clients.

Please heed the following directions that will help prevent the spread of illness:

Follow all guidance from the Florida Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Read about symptoms, prevention, treatment, current cases in Florida, FAQs, and more at [FloridaHealth.gov/COVID-19](https://www.floridahealth.gov/covid-19) and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. Follow the Florida Department of Health on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for regular updates.

Hold each other accountable by encouraging coworkers and clients to wash their hands and keep surfaces clean. [Download materials you can print and post in your building here](#). Please follow these tips and share with your staff:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow the CDC's recommendations when using a facemask.

- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. **The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a health care facility).** For all other healthy individuals not in these situations, the CDC does not recommend wearing a facemask for protection against respiratory diseases.

Important resources and precautionary measures for health care facilities and providers from the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) is online in PDF form [here](#). It is extremely important that your backup staffing plans are up to date.

Health care providers are asked to report to their county health department ([FloridaHealth.gov/chdep/contact](https://www.floridahealth.gov/chdep/contact)) any patient who meets the criteria shown online [here](#), (fever, cough, shortness of breath, and potential exposure to the virus).

DOH has established a call center for questions about COVID-19. You can call 1-866-779-6121 (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or email COVID-19@flhealth.gov. If you have questions related to APD, please contact your Regional Office ([find your Region's phone number here](#)).

I care very deeply about your safety and the safety of all providers and customers. We cannot be complacent about this issue, and we all share the responsibility of keeping Florida's most vulnerable citizens healthy.

Thank you,

Barbara Palmer
Director
Agency for Persons with Disabilities