



William Ashe, Ed.D. - *Executive Director*

ARIS Business Office
Jason Richardson, C.P.A.
P.O. Box 4409
White River Jct., VT 05001
Ph: (802) 280-1911
Fax: (802) 295-6637

Bradford
Jessalyn Gustin, B.A.
267 Waits River Rd.
Bradford, VT 05033
Ph: 802-222-9235
Fax: 802-222-5864

Moretown
Dennis Gray, M. Ed
P.O. Box 719
Moretown, VT 05660
Ph: 802-496-7830
Fax: 802-496-7833

Randolph
Dawn Kearon, B.S.
P.O. Box 405
Randolph, VT 05060
Ph: 802-728-4476
Fax: 802-728-6741

VCIN
Patrick Frawley, Ph. D.
P.O. Box 719
Moretown, VT 05660
Ph: 802-496-7830
Fax: 802-496-7833

To: Upper Valley Services, Consumers, Guardians, Family, Home Providers, and Staff,

From: Bill Ashe, Executive Director

Re: UVS Plan for COVID-19 Precautions.

Date: March 13, 2020

Let me start this by saying that there is no intended symbolism with my writing this on Friday the 13th. With all of the daily changes and uncertainty about how to manage in the face of this virus, it is important that we have in place some reasonable guidelines that folks can follow during this difficult and challenging time. This guideline is intended to be inclusive of everyone in order to control as best we can the spread of this virus.

While this is a serious situation the basic approach to slow the spread of this virus are largely common sense. While a lot is not known, it is clear that the groups who are at most risk are those who are over 60, and/or people with underlying medical conditions. These medical conditions include people with diabetes, heart disease, morbid obesity, kidney failure, anyone with pulmonary disease including COPD and asthma, and anyone with a history of pneumonia. Individuals who fall within one or more of these groups should exercise the greatest level of caution.

General Information

- Due to the risk of infection, UVS requests that anyone associated with UVS who is ill, has a fever, has travelled to areas/spent time with people – even secondarily - affected by the coronavirus exercise extreme vigilance in the community **and not come into services/work or UVS offices**. This includes all families, people in services, home providers, guardians and staff. If anyone associated with UVS arrives at UVS or to work with a UVS person while sick, they will be sent home.
- If you are a family member, guardian or home provider you may choose to keep the person you support at home, especially if they have respiratory or immune-compromised illnesses.

- It is important to note that the elderly and those with chronic health conditions are the most at risk. **Having a disability does not by itself put someone at a higher risk.** However, it may be harder for a person with a disability to take steps needed to keep them safe. We'll pay attention to this very carefully and **continue reinforcing 20-second thorough handwashing, learning ways to stop touching our faces, and recognizing the first signs of being sick.** We also should be greeting each other with words, waving, bowing, or tapping feet – instead of hugging or shaking hands.
- We are asking that case managers review each person's individual supports and to consider their specific needs; **this will be used to develop a person-specific Coronavirus Plan.** People with complicated respiratory histories are considered high risk. Some of the things that will be included in this review will include: having a good supply of food and medications, having back-up support people and how they might be utilized in the event of a quarantine/isolation, and understanding who is at the highest risk.
- We are asking staff close to each person we serve to help **them assemble/imagine a "fun packet" of things** they'd like to have with them: music, books, favorite snacks, comforting items, that might make them feel more settled in the event of quarantine/isolation. We ask all of you to do the same for yourselves!
- UVS case managers will use discretion about home visits. The purpose of this is to avoid bringing a virus into the home. This practice will be followed particularly in homes where highly vulnerable people reside.
- At some point UVS may be directed to or need to close for some services. We will inform you of this immediately if it occurs and work to make sure people are supported in their homes.
- We are working with our board, the legislature, and state government to ensure that all UVS staff and home providers maintain their pay and benefits in the event that this disruption continues.

Specific Information

For consumers who are in the high risk groups the following guidelines should followed.

1. Avoid community events and activities that involve being in close proximity with groupings of people. For example, avoid activities such as movie theaters, busy stores and restaurants, public transportation, group events such as music venues, shows etc. This will require individual planning in order to adjust individual schedules and routines. At this point we are not closing community support services. We are asking these services to be adjusted particularly to avoid settings with large groups of people.
2. For people with jobs that involve working in settings with lots of people who will be in close proximity, these folks should stay out of work. This will necessitate working with employers in the hope that they will maintain positions until this emergency is better managed and health officials relax their warnings and recommendations. If there is a question there should be a team discussion to evaluate the safety of the work environment.
3. Please limit the number of non-essential visitors in order to minimize exposure.
4. UVS day staff should be available to continue supporting people at home. We are not cancelling services at this time. We are just asking that they be rearranged to make them safer.

For consumers who are not in High Risk

1. Follow the guidance that is available from the Vermont Department of Health and the CDC.

2. Practice good hygiene, especially frequent hand washing
3. Avoid large group gathering of people
4. Do not travel unnecessarily
5. If you feel ill, stay home AND contact your PCP for advise

Other information

1. Case managers, in their planning will also try to collect information about the vulnerability status of primary care givers. This is to assist us in being better prepared.
2. UVS is establishing a communication network that will enable staff to be in contact with each other as needed.
3. Case managers who are working remotely will remain available via phone contact.
4. This situation is evolving by the day. UVS has a team that will meet regularly to consider what changes are needed to these plans as we all work through this together. As circumstances change, we will adjust accordingly and will communicate to all stakeholders.

While this is indeed a challenging situation, I am confident that we will get through this successfully. We will do this by working together. We are in regular contact with the Vermont Department of Health and with DAIL. These agencies have been very responsive and helpful to us as we manage our way through this. Any additional guidance that we get will be immediately passed along. The main remedy here is through continued common sense steps that all of us should be taking.