



**HELPING RESTORE ABILITY**  
A Non Profit Serving Texans with Disabilities



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# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) CAREGIVER RESPONSE PLAN

As of March 18, 2020

## **HELPING RESTORE ABILITY MISSION:**

1. Helping Restore Ability envisions a future in which no Texan with a disability lacks the resources they need to live a full and independent life.
2. Helping Restore Ability is THE resource for Texans with disabilities and their families to find the care they need.

**Regardless of our response level as outlined in the following plan, HRA will continue to provide services to our clients as we are able.**

## **BASIC FACTS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

Coronavirus is a respiratory disease first detected in China that has now been detected in almost 90 locations internationally, including in the United States and Texas. The virus has been named SARS-CoV-2 and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” and abbreviated to COVID-19.

**NOTE:** This information is valid as of March 18, 2020. During this virus outbreak, you can best stay informed of changes and developments by visiting the CDC Website and subscribing to their daily E-Newsletter. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

## **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 INFECTION?**

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 have had mild-to-severe respiratory illness. Symptoms including fever, cough and shortness of breath which may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

## **HOW DOES THE VIRUS SPREAD?**

The usual spread for COVID-19 is from close person-to-person contact through respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. It may also be spread through airborne transmission, when tiny droplets remain in the air even after the person with the virus leaves the area. Thus, contaminated surfaces may be another, less common, route of transmission. It should be noted that common disinfectants kill COVID-19 on surfaces.

## **ARE SOME PEOPLE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO GETTING COVID-19?**

Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions or immunocompromised systems seem to be at a higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness.

## **HOW IS COVID-19 DIAGNOSED AND TREATED?**

Diagnosis may be difficult with only a physical exam because mild cases of COVID-19 may appear like the flu or a bad cold. A laboratory test is the only way to confirm the diagnosis and currently, the tests are in short supply. As of now, there is not a vaccine available.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I BECOME SICK?**

Over the phone, contact your health care provider; **call ahead before going to see a doctor or emergency room.** Tell them your symptoms and travel history (or close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case, if applicable). Always wear a mask when leaving your home when you are experiencing symptoms.

- Have you traveled internationally within the last 3 months?
- Have you come into close contact with someone who has a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis within 14 days?
- Do you have a fever greater than 100.4 degrees OR symptoms of lower respiratory illness such as cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing?

If you answer YES, to any of the questions your health care provider should advise next steps which may include testing and quarantine for 14 days.

## **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PLAN AHEAD?**

We need to plan that usual services may be disrupted. These include services provided by hospitals and other health care facilities, schools, restaurants, government offices and post offices. Large public events may be cancelled, and air travel curtailed.

What is known about the spread of COVID-19 within the United States is changing daily. We need to plan for the potential of high absenteeism. These guidelines are not designed to create widespread panic, but rather reassurance that we have thought through our response. These guidelines are an attempt to place proactive plans in place for HRA, recognizing we need to be flexible and constantly monitoring the situation utilizing local, state and national resources. It is important that we communicate only accurate and up-to-date information. Rumors and misinformation will only contribute to confusion and unnecessary fear. The Executive Team will need to address any misinformation among attendants and stay informed about COVID-19 in our community.

## **Expect modifications and changes to this plan.**

Helping Restore Ability will continue to monitor and work with the CDC, the Texas Department of State Health Services and Tarrant County Public Health Department regarding our response. As new information becomes available Helping Restore Ability will ensure caregiver have the most up-to-date response plan.

# LEVEL 4: GREEN FOR PREVENTION AND MONITORING RESPONSE

## WHEN IS THIS RESPONSE LEVEL INDICATED?

Generally, the Level 4 Green Response Plan will remain in place if there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 from community spread, not related to foreign travel, in the DFW area.

## WHAT WILL OUR COORDINATED RESPONSE BE AT THIS LEVEL?

At this response level, we should all be practicing and following basic prevention measures:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly for 20 seconds at least, using soap and water throughout the day. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, if soap and water aren't available.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or flexed elbow, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, sneezing or coughing.
- Avoid shaking hands entirely to reduce the risk of spreading infection.
- Face masks are not recommended for use by healthy people to protect against infection.
- Stay home when you are ill. If a caregiver report to the workplace (client location) with a cough and a fever over 100.4 degrees, they will be asked to go home.
- If any caregiver recently traveled outside the United States, and they have symptoms, they will be asked to self-quarantine (per the CDC guidelines) and monitor their symptoms before returning to work. The individual should be free from a fever for 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medicine such as acetaminophen, before returning to work.
- The CEO will reach out to partner with agencies to evaluate their planned response.

# LEVEL 3: BLUE FOR HEIGHTENED MONITORING AND RESPONSE

## WHEN IS THIS RESPONSE LEVEL INDICATED?

We will move to the next level, should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed in the respective County where a caregiver is providing the service.

## WHAT WILL OUR COORDINATED RESPONSE BE AT THIS LEVEL?

At this response level, we should continue to practice all the basic prevention measures outlined in the Level 4 Green Response. The following additional precautions will be put in place:

- All caregivers should reconsider travelling to the area where a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed from community spread. Our travel policy communicated March 12, 2020, remains in effect.
- The PAS care coordinator will monitor the caregiver P.T.O. and their plans to travel outside the North Texas area.
- Caregivers traveling outside the North Texas area may be instructed to remain quarantined based on the places visited, possible exposure and client status.
- All caregiver cases related to travel will be examined on a case by case basis.
- The intake process will include questions of symptoms and exposure of any family members. When scheduling a client for services, these additional screening questions will need to be completed prior to the clients onboarding:
  - Have you or your family members traveled internationally within the last 3 months?
    - If yes, confirm if travel occurred to countries where transmission is known to be occurring: China, Italy, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, or Iran.
      - Clients - If yes to one of the countries where transmission is known, we should not schedule them to be seen. The COVID-19 clearance should be confirmed before processing.
      - Caregivers: - If yes to one of the countries where transmission is known, then caregivers should consult with a supervisor on how best to proceed. The COVID-19 clearance should be confirmed before processing.
  - Have you or your family member come into close contact with someone who has a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis within 14 days?
    - Clients - If yes, we should not schedule them to be seen.
    - Caregivers– If yes, contact manager and do not report to work.
  - Do you or your family member have a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher OR symptoms of lower respiratory illness such as a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing?

- If clients have fever. We should not schedule them to be seen. A Caregiver should consult with a supervisor on how best to proceed.
  - caregivers if you have fever, you should contact your manager and not report to work.
- The Executive Team will plan for the possibility of canceling special events, meetings and trainings, keeping in mind factors such as crowd density, contact between participants and whether attendees may be in a high-risk group.

# LEVEL 2: YELLOW RESPONSE FOR HIGH RISK RESPONSE

## WHEN IS THIS RESPONSE LEVEL INDICATED?

We will move to this level, should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed in the respective County and school districts decide to close. We will also move to this level, should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed between a family member of a client or caregiver.

## WHAT WILL OUR COORDINATED RESPONSE BE AT THIS LEVEL?

Again, all measures outlined in Level 4 and Level 3 remain in effect, with the additional precautions put in place:

- The work schedule for the attendants will be decided by HRA team, and some decisions will be taken considering case by case evaluation.
- The PAS care coordinator will use phone calls and telehealth for supervisory visits for all clients.
- The in-person visits to clients and new client admission will be suspended.
- Caregivers should use the Employee Assistance Plan (Contact information provided in your benefits package.) to help with stress reduction and managing fear and anxiety. Current statistics indicate more deaths are caused every year from influenza than are anticipated or projected for COVID-19. Those at greatest risk are the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. Keep current on the facts and avoid rumors and misinformation.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

# LEVEL 1: RED RESPONSE FOR HIGH RISK RESPONSE

## WHEN IS THIS RESPONSE LEVEL INDICATED?

We will move to this level, should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed or presumptive positive between a member of clients or caregiver's family.

## WHAT WILL OUR COORDINATED RESPONSE BE AT THIS LEVEL?

- At this level, involved caregivers will be self-quarantined at home for 14 days and monitor themselves for any symptoms. If you have fever or any kind of respiratory difficulties such as coughing or shortness of breath, call your doctor or a health care provider and explain your symptoms over the phone before going to the doctor's office, urgent care facility or emergency room. Your health care provider will direct you to next steps. At this point, the local health department will be involved, and we need to follow their protocols and guidelines to reduce spread. The CDC also provides guidelines if you are sick.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>

- If we move to this level and caregivers are quarantined at home, caregivers will not be required to use accrued PTO for hours not worked; however, caregivers may opt to use their accrued PTO if desired.
- Marketing will prepare a statement for the public to be posted on our website and social media pages outlining our current response plan throughout the process.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

If anyone outside of Helping Restore Ability asks you questions regarding our response plan or status within our agency, please direct all correspondence to our Director of Research, Girish Shelke – [gshelke@hratexas.org](mailto:gshelke@hratexas.org). This will assist us in providing consistent messaging as well as preventing any miscommunication. Helping Restore Ability will continue to monitor and work with the CDC and state and county Departments of Health and Human Services regarding our response. As new information becomes available, Helping Restore Ability will ensure attendants have the most up-to-date response plan. \*\*\*



