

## Resource Guide on Creative Problem-Solving

ODDS is collecting information from providers and case management entities on creative ways they are supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This ranges from everything from supporting people to stay connected with family and friends to helping people understand precautions for staying safe.

Here are some ideas provided directly from Community Developmental Disabilities Programs, Brokerages, providers, family members and ODDS staff.

### From families



- Instead of dining at his favorite restaurants, we order to-go, pick up or delivery.
- Instead of going to the grocery store, we are teaching him to use Instacart grocery delivery service.
- Instead of going to the movie theater, we are planning home movie showings.
- For the things we can't find an alternate activity for, we added them to a "Coming Soon Fall 2020" activity list to help our son look forward to the future.
- Staying connected to our son when he is 2.5 hours away from us has been a challenge for our family over this past year. We talk to him via FaceTime daily (sometimes several times a day), text during the day, call each other, and do the best we can to make sure we are a part of his daily life as much as possible. When COVID-19 hit, we contacted all our friends and family members on Facebook and let them know our son would love to hear from them. Several immediately stepped up, asking me for his mailing address and ideas of what to send. Soon I started getting excited calls from our boy, telling me all about the treasures he had received that day. There were cards, stickers, small toys, movies to share with his housemates, and treats. I often had to explain to him who the packages came from, and how they knew him. This opened the door for conversations we have never had with our son before and expanded his world.
- We continue to have one Personal Support Worker who works weekdays, and two PSWs who alternate evenings that continue to

come in for their scheduled shifts, just maintaining social distancing and sanitizing throughout. They take him on abbreviated outings to check mail and get car side delivery from his preferred restaurants. We have provided fabric masks for them to use in the community if they need to run to the store for him.

- We are utilizing the remote monitoring option for our Monday through Friday awake overnight staffing since that PSW has high risk health issues. We gave the PSW access to our in-home video cameras as well as audio. She is able to monitor when he takes his meds, and what he eats during the night, and provides an update to the morning staff upon her arrival. She is also able to visually monitor for signs of seizure activity, so we can be prepared. It's been working so beautifully. We had a very real need, and it was so wonderful to call up and have it approved without hesitation.

## Case Management Services



### Using technology

- We have had great success with remote monitoring using Zoom. One particular story is of an individual that was presumed COVID-19 positive. His Personal Agent and Personal Support Workers (PSWs) worked together to get everyone on Zoom and his PSWs did remote audio/visual check-ins three-four times daily, as he was self-quarantining. The best part was doing a “walk through” of his home for PSWs to assure his living space was remaining clean and safe. His test eventually came back negative.
- One created a Facebook account just to use Facebook messenger video chat. I can chat with one individual at a time, to create a way for those without FaceTime or video chat on their phones to access a chat function. For some folks, this has really expanded our ability to interact remotely.
- We've had support from our IT for options to communicate with our clients. We have at least the following options at our disposal depending upon what the customer is most comfortable or familiar with: Zoom, Webex, Skype, GoTo Webinar, Whats App and Facetime.

## Helping with essential resources

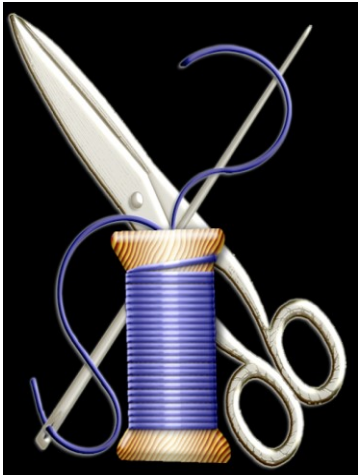


- Early on, many brokerages put together pantries. Each office bought shelf-stable food for a time, plus any toilet paper we could get, sanitizers and reminders of how to stay well and practice healthy protocols. We put those together for our folks that are most vulnerable and independent. As we identify a need, we arrange to either have the individual meet us somewhere open or drop the care package at their home.
- We put together a temporary policy to purchase essential cleaning supplies for people in need, with the help of their provider.
- We have helped people to create a “go kit” if they need to go to the hospital/ER. This has proved challenging in some cases. For example, one young man will not wear regular masks. So the provider and I brainstormed about how we might make a face covering work for him. He is a big fan of Disney, so I reached out to the local vendors for any Disney character leggings they had on stock. We are making them into custom masks for him and his provider, to be accompanied by his personal items, some hand sanitizers, wipes, and alcohol spray.
- We are finding that the basics are heroic right now: we contact each person on our caseload and ensure that they have what they need, sharing supplies and toilet paper, and making sure that they are following the stay at home guidelines.

## Providing case management services

- Since our office is closed to visitors, we want people in our community to know that we are available to service their needs. We set up a station outside our door with pertinent forms that our PSWs might need and posted a sign on our door to please call us from the parking area with any questions. We have a slot in our door where

our visitors can drop off timesheets and other important documents so they can still be processed in a timely manner.



- To help people stay engaged at home, I have reviewed ISP goals, looking for resources to match the goals in creative ways that reflect their interests. For one woman, I found an online fashion design class — a long term career goal and dream of hers. She also likes sewing so, I suggested that (with provider support) she make masks for the first responders. She was delighted with this idea as a way to help her community.
- We made it a priority to contact all 450 people we support. We shifted our work to limit the number of people in the office so that our office would remain functional.
- For individuals who are used to having a schedule with work and activities that they no longer can participate in, I have scheduled more calls to monitor and just allow them to speak to someone other than their family. The routine and friendly support has been very helpful for those who are having anxiety.
- Getting creative with conducting remote work: I drove to a person's home to complete an ONA review from their driveway as they came outside and waved. I sat in the driveway and conversed with the customer over speaker phone to finish the assessment review.
- My most complex situation was for an individual, who has been going through a medical crisis during the pandemic. It's not creative, and it's not new, but there is always a lot of work involved in maintaining complex medical situations in the community. As the situation has progressed, they have begun to require constant monitoring, and the PSW has adjusted to be even more available. They need a provider to check up on them throughout the day and react quickly if their health indications become critical (which can happen very fast and the person doesn't recognize it). I have spent a lot of time with them discussing back-up plans if anything were to happen to their PSW and discussing contingency plans for how their support needs may evolve going forward. I did a new needs reassessment with the individual and their provider as their support needs have greatly increased.

- Our Services Coordinators have been making numerous calls and contacts, including many non-billable actions that they are documenting. We have 600 documented progress notes in just a few weeks which is more than we usually have in a whole month so they are really working the phones hard to stay in contact with people.
- Two Services Coordinators worked to coordinate an entry into residential services via telehealth. The meeting takes longer but the results are well worth it.
- Our staff are meeting the face-to-face requirements by doing what they refer to as “drive-bys” and through a window observation, along with using video conferencing.
- Facilitated a process for providers to order personal protective equipment (PPE) through our emergency operations center (EOC) and delivered on the order.
- Our office expects that every individual in service is contacted at a minimum of once every two weeks. And, we are contacting our residential providers once a week

### Other creative ideas

- We are having our self-advocacy group meeting virtually. Staff have added lots of great resources of social stories to assist people during this time.
- We organized a fundraiser and went out to buy groceries that we left on every group home’s door marked for staff to take home so they didn’t have to fight the crowds at stores after work.
  - We organized a parade with other provider agencies and drove by 26 group and foster homes. It was a huge hit!
  - We are in the process of cutting and sewing 430 masks, one for every individual in our services.
- Virtual tours of national parks
- Time capsule project to be opened in the future
- Project with local university where students will be getting internship credit for being conversation partners with people with disabilities.



## Provider – Employment

- Some transition teachers and providers are suggesting people add chapters to their video resume. They are doing short (30 second to two minute) videos of chores and activities people are doing at home. They are trying to show transferable skills. It could be things like proper hand washing prior to preparing a meal as an example. Also, activities that take a couple of steps such as taking out the trash showing how the person uses their cues and prompts to remember the steps.



- Some provider agencies are doing virtual career exploration, wellness, interview prep, interview attire, etc. They are doing this in groups remotely and one to one.
- Some agencies are continuing to stay in contact with employers, make new contacts, and building towards job creation looking to meet employer's needs once the executive stay at home order is lifted. A few have told me they are contacting employers they have long- standing relationships with just to check in and get their thoughts on the current situation. Through this, they are able to hear about what they are projecting their needs are going to be in the future. This is helping the job developers to come up with potential strategies for development.

## Provider – Residential

### Technology and staying in touch

- One of the people supported through individualized services has been self-isolating with her family. She was really missing her Direct Support Professionals (DSP) so they got creative. She uses sign language to communicate, so they were able to support her through the window. This totally made her day and she's still able to self-isolate while getting the supports she needs.
- We purchased iPads and have utilized them for social connections with family members and friends, meetings/trainings- social opportunities are planned such as bingo via ZOOM- picture contests- karaoke-surprise birthday parties via zoom.
- We are holding our stakeholder meetings via Zoom. Supported individuals will have the opportunity to talk about how they are feeling

with shelter in place, ask questions, give ideas for new activities within social distancing expectations, share jokes, etc.

- Each client in our home understands and is processing this differently. Staff are only answering their questions about what's going on and avoiding talking about the negative stuff in the news. I do have one client who watches the news and understands what is happening. We check in with her regularly to make sure it's not causing her stress. We go on daily walks and on car rides so they can see that everything is okay.

## **Safety**

- One provider had nearly all of their DSP staff volunteer to “live in” at group homes for two week periods so that staff could be rotated with limited staff coming in and out – providers have also used the approach of having one staff designated to do all the community work (grocery, doctor visits, etc.) while other staff are the “stay home” staff.
- With the Governor's orders to Stay Home, Save Lives, we had team members who would typically be providing support in people's homes (maintenance, quality, etc.) who were not considered essential visitors during this time. In order to help minimize the number of people needing to be out and about, this group of people are stepping up to do the grocery shopping for the people we support.
- Thanks to skilled DSPs, we were able to identify the earliest signs of a possible urinary tract infection for someone who is medically fragile, non-verbal and high risk for COVID-19 complications. Most would have interpreted his slight cough and low-grade fever as early signs to be screened at the ER considering it was a weekend. However, they knew, due to their longevity working with this person, the history of bladder spasms/infections often causes nausea and coughing. The staff got in touch with the primary and were able to arrange for staff to pick up a specimen cup and return it to the hospital without having to expose the individual to the ER if possible. The individual returned to baseline within a couple of days.



- We have been assisting clients on proper hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer and making sure they are washing their hands often. All medical appointments have either been rescheduled or clients are using Zoom to communicate with their doctors.
- We are going for walks with masks on around our neighborhood instead of going into town to stores. We are

explaining to our clients how technology has changed and instead of running our own errands like "back in the day" we can now get everything delivered to our door to stay safe.

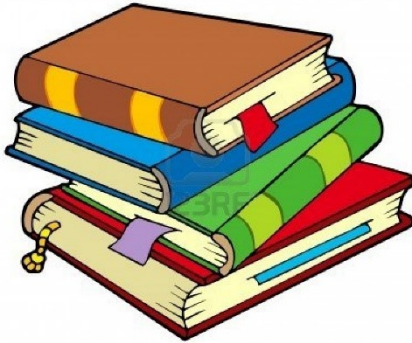
- We have talked about how to make a mask with a clear plastic window so one client can still read our lips since she struggles to understand us without seeing our lips move as we speak.

### **Activities**

- We have been maintaining set schedules for bedtime/morning routines with the hope that once programs re-open, it will be an easier transition back.
- Providing structured activities during the normal day program hours. This includes arts and crafts, games, puzzles, karaoke, virtual music therapy and cooking lessons.
- Getting outside for walks – while maintaining social distancing - when possible. Some homes are doing beach body and/or adaptive yoga by taking advantage of the free programs being offered at this time.
- Lots of movie days, everyone seems to have Disney +.
- Country drives for people who have to get out or it causes challenging behaviors.
- Fun takeout meals with people's favorite foods.
- Many people we support have Easter traditions with their family and friends. It was difficult for many of them to have this holiday pass by without being able to fulfill these plans. On top of that, many DSPs were worried they might not be able to provide the Easter decorations and surprises important to the people we support. We made and delivered more than 100 Easter baskets delivered helped make sure the day was still special!



- One resident started his first virtual trivia and game night streamed via Facebook Live! He enjoyed being a gameshow host, especially when it was time to “spin the wheel” for bonus points.
- Another resident has started a virtual bingo night held every Friday night.



- An individual has been going to the library twice a week for many years. Staff began collecting this person’s favorite types of books before the shelter in place order went into effect. We set up a small conference room at our administrative office that could be solely dedicated for this use by only him and his care staff so it would be a clean and safe space. The room was sanitized,

books laid out ready for when the library was closed. When the day came, staff had prepared a different library icon for his picture schedule, it included books and an office, not the word library. On the way to the new “library” staff informed him that they were definitely going to check out books and there are a lot of books for him to look at. He’s returned five or so times now and is pulling the new office books icon for his schedule himself and showing happy hands and face.

- One of the folks we support just got a computer with video editing software. We had previously taken some video footage to highlight her success. The client offered to edit her own video, even though she hadn’t done anything like this before. I shared an online folder with her with all the footage, and once she downloaded and inputted onto the program she wanted to use, we connected over google meet. She presented her screen and I was able to walk her through some of the features. Since then she put the entire video together and showed me a preview of her first attempt using FaceTime on her phone.
- Upon the temporary closure of DSA, we were very concerned for an individual served who has big energy and imagination each day. We have arranged many opportunities for this person to be our delivery person, providing safe back-door pick-ups of supplies/craft projects/flowers and other activities- and safe front porch deliveries to our group homes. We gave him a clipboard with paper and

pens/pencils and an agency logo shirt. He wears his work gloves and brings his clipboard along each time he does deliveries. He has been coping well with the closure of his day program.

- One resident is a social butterfly. Her schedule is one of her top priorities and she knows it by heart for the entire month. Staying home has been difficult for her to adjust to. One DSP helped her set up a paint studio in her kitchen! It was added to her schedule so her routine was maintained and she had something to look forward to.
- For one woman we support, it is very important for her hair to look good. With her hair salon temporarily closed, she was beginning to miss her hair being done, one of her staff recognized how important this was to her and asked her if she could help. She cut and styled her hair for her.
- One of our resident's church is very important to him and he really wanted to attend Easter services online. With the help of his DSP, he enjoyed Easter services from the comfort of his own home.
- Our clients have been busy with many activities during the day. We have been gardening, feeding the birds, art/crafts, picnics, renting movies, playing Wii, and sightseeing field trips.