



STEVEN M. NEUHAUS
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DR. IRINA GELMAN, DPM, MPH, PhD
COMMISSIONER

COUNTY OF ORANGE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

November 6, 2020

RE: Orange County Concerns for the Global COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Early Intervention and/or Pre-School Provider:

I hope that this letter finds you and your family healthy and safe. As you know, through an Executive Order signed by Governor Cuomo on June 5, special education services may resume for in-person delivery for the summer term. In its guidance dated June 18, 2020, the New York State Department of Health has allowed the resumption of in-person, individual services to children in the Early Intervention Program although it has recommended the continuation of telehealth as the preferred method of delivery to the maximum extent possible.

The local impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic as of November 4, 2020 has resulted in 14,094 confirmed cases as well as 500 deaths to date in Orange County. Of those cases, 46% have been in individuals 18-44 years of age, with the second largest number of confirmed cases in the 45-64 age group (35%). Orange County is currently experiencing a surge in new positive cases. In fact, we continue to see new COVID-19 positive resident cases in Orange County daily. While children account for 963 cases or (6.8%) of the total cases, this virus is completely new and although some symptoms are common among those suffering from the illness, the complete list of symptoms, as well as long term complications remain unknown. In fact, some children seem to be at risk for developing more severe complications from COVID-19, such as multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), which is of great concern, especially for children who are medically fragile. For more information about MIS-C, please visit the following website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children/mis-c.html>.

Of additional concern is that the New York State Department of Health has not mandated regular interval testing for COVID-19 prior to in-person service provision for providers of in-person Early Intervention or Pre-school Services. This is especially concerning because masks are not recommended in children under two years of age. Further, many children under the age of 5 will not be able to wear masks due to underlying medical conditions and/or inability to keep the masks on for a prolonged period of time, and the providers may also not be able to wear masks due to the nature of the services being provided.

Prior to providing in-person individual EI and/or Pre-School services, I suggest that you and your staff, if any, have a negative PCR test prior to the resumption of in-person services and have testing at two-week intervals, consistent with the NY Forward Phase 2 minimal guidance. I also suggest that you implement mandatory health screening practices in your safety plan (e.g. questionnaire, temperature check) for employees, clients and their families asking about (1) COVID-19 symptoms in past 14 days, (2) positive COVID-19 test in past 14 days, and/or (3) close or proximate contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in past 14 days, (4) current temperature, (5) have you been tested for COVID-19 in the last 14 days, and (6) have you recently traveled to any states that New York State has travel restrictions on, or out of the country, to assess whether you can provide in-person individual services based on the potential exposure from a particular client or his/her household member, in advance of presenting for each in-person service appointment, consistent with NY Forward guidance. If you test positive for COVID-19 or are in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, you must stay home and notify your employer as well as the Early Intervention Office. Further, I direct you to the NYSDOH document dated June 18, 2020 entitled, "Reopening New York: Resuming in-Person Early Intervention Program Services for additional information and directions.

As of the date of this letter, in consideration of all these factors, please consider the continuation of telehealth and other distance learning services whenever possible and until further notice.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Early Intervention Office at 845-360-6630.

The OCDOH takes the health and safety of our children very seriously, even more so during the worst public health crisis in a century. While infection rates are increasing on a daily basis, we need to proceed with caution and take every step possible in resuming in-person individual EI and/or Pre-School services safely and responsibly.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irina Gelman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Irina Gelman, Commissioner
Orange County Health Department



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EARLY INTERVENTION/PRESCHOOL PROVIDER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Return Signed Forms to:

Early Intervention Providers: Please return a copy of the signed form to the child's Ongoing Service Coordinator. Thank you.

Preschool Providers: Please return a signed copy of this form to both the County and the child's School District. County forms may be sent to: OCDOH/Intervention Services Division at 124 Main Street, Goshen, NY 10924 or fax to 845-291-2418. Thank you.

I acknowledge receipt of the **11/6/20 OCDOH Commissioner Letter** to Early Intervention and/or Preschool Providers regarding the Orange County Concerns for the Global COVID-19 Pandemic

DATE: _____ AGENCY (if Applicable): _____

PRINT PROVIDER NAME: _____

PROVIDER SIGNATURE: _____

