

# Initial Actions to Protect and Support Illinois Residents During the COVID-19 Pandemic - March to July 2020

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**IDHS is here for you.** When the COVID-19 pandemic began, IDHS took swift, responsible, life-saving measures. Our team has been vigilant to ensure the safety of staff, partner organizations, and those we serve.

One of the values that IDHS always strives for and drives towards is equity. This means that IDHS is accountable to providing relief and assistance to those who are in greatest need and who have been marginalized from resources and opportunities. This has been true of IDHS' response to COVID-19. Additional resources have been provided to protect and support people who experience or are at-risk of homelessness, immigrant and refugee families, victims of domestic violence, people with disabilities, opportunity youth, unemployed adults, and individuals and families who are or at risk of being food insecure.

Following is a summary of actions, organized by each of its five major Divisions, that IDHS took during the pandemic to fulfill its mission and commitment to the people of Illinois. Now is an important opportunity to reflect on IDHS' response to the pandemic, because IDHS has already begun to plan for the coming days, months, and years. IDHS learned valuable lessons that it will use to help evolve, grow, and improve the human services system through a reinvention and restoration process.

## Top Ten IDHS Actions at a Glance

- Swift transition to on-line, safe, accessible, and expanded basic life-saving supports for individuals from birth to older adulthood
- Significant investments to address increased food insecurity
- Employment and training opportunities for youth and adults
- Critical housing supports and homelessness prevention funding
- Expanded protections for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking
- Emergency child care for essential workers
- Transformation of safety practices and implementation of precautionary measures at state operated hospitals and developmental centers
- Expanded mental health and wellness counseling and supports
- Crisis management support and provision of stability measures and funding for the human services sector
- Support for immigrant and refugee families and others left out of federal stimulus funding



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## **Five Divisions of IDHS**

**Family and Community Services**

**Developmental Disabilities**

**Rehabilitation Services**

**Mental Health**

**Substance Use Prevention and Recovery**

# Family and Community Services

## ACCESS TO FOOD AND NUTRITION: SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

- SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) helps low-income people and families buy the food they need for good health. Benefits are provided on the **Illinois Link Card** - (an electronic card) that is accepted at most grocery stores statewide. The program is managed by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture and IDHS administers the program in Illinois.
- **Governor JB Pritzker and IDHS announced that more than 450,000 Illinois households will receive additional Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.** Eligible individuals and families did not need to take any action. Each household is now receiving the maximum benefit through the SNAP program if they were not already receiving the maximum amount possible. The benefits were automatically added to their Link cards.

Maximum amounts per household size are as follows:

Number in SNAP household	Maximum benefit
1	\$194
2	\$355
3	\$509
4	\$646
5	\$768
6	\$921
7	\$1,018
8	\$1,164
Each additional person	Add \$146

- Governor JB Pritzker and IDHS announced that SNAP customers can shop online to purchase eligible food items with SNAP benefits using their Illinois Link card.

The first two retailers available for SNAP purchases on-line were Walmart [grocery.walmart.com](https://grocery.walmart.com) and Amazon [www.amazon.com/SNAP](https://www.amazon.com/SNAP). More information and Frequently Asked Questions are available at [www.DHS.Illinois.gov/OnlineSNAP](https://www.DHS.Illinois.gov/OnlineSNAP).

Additional grocery retailers are welcome to join the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Online. Any retailers interested in the program can find more information and apply at [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/online-purchasing-pilot](https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/online-purchasing-pilot).



**Now available:**  
SNAP participants can  
order groceries online  
at Amazon & Walmart!

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## Food for Students

- IDHS announced that Illinois was approved to provide approximately 316,000 Illinois households with additional SNAP benefits. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) authorized and will fund Illinois' Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program, which will bring food benefits to all school-aged children who are eligible for free or reduced meals. The benefits were issued to all SNAP households with school-aged children. These new benefits were automatically added to family Link Cards in 2020.

Families who do not currently receive SNAP benefits, but who have children who are eligible to receive free or reduced meals if school were in session, need to apply for the P-EBT program. To learn more about the P-EBT program, information can be found [here](#).

**To date, more than \$241.7 million in P-EBT benefits have been issued to 2.1 million children.**

- To apply for regular SNAP benefits or P-EBT benefits, customers can visit [abe.illinois.gov](http://abe.illinois.gov)

## Food Banks

- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides food at no cost to help supplement the diets of low-income households. The TEFAP is a Federal program, administered by the [Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\)](#) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and managed by IDHS in Illinois. IDHS contracts with 8 food banks across the state to oversee the release of food to food pantries and soup kitchens. The money granted under the contracts is used to give both privately-donated food and USDA food.
- IDHS has continued to work to maximize federal funds for food banks and pantries across Illinois. **IDHS received USDA/Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approval for a Disaster Household Distribution plan, which allows food banks throughout the State of Illinois to distribute resources to up to 1.57 million Illinoisans without providing eligibility forms or income verification.**
- **Through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), Illinois received a \$15 million supplement to our annual allocation for TEFAP.** IDHS's eight provider food banks will distribute those resources to food pantries, shelters, and soup kitchens in their areas. IDHS expects another infusion of supplemental TEFAP dollars in the future through the CARES Act. IDHS also received federal approval last month to implement changes that allow for quicker, safer access to food for more people through TEFAP.
- To find a food pantry or soup kitchen please visit: [www.illinoisfoodbanks.org/sites.asp](http://www.illinoisfoodbanks.org/sites.asp).

## Youth Investment

- Based on an upcoming Notice of Funding Opportunity, IDHS anticipates that in September 2020, it will begin implementation of the new Illinois Youth Investment Program (IYIP), a multi-faceted approach to supporting at-risk youth, ages 16 to 24. IYIP will aim to ensure an equitable opportunity to access employment for at-risk youth 16-24 in Illinois' most needy communities. The program will consider the various barriers to employment that youth face as well as their physical, emotional, social, and mental health needs. Further, this opportunity will be designed to target and address the added barriers presented to youth employment by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **IDHS is also supporting the COVID-19 Summer Youth Employment Program (C-SYEP) that will be implemented and managed by IDHS-funded Youth Services organizations across Illinois. The C-SYEP seeks to help employ 2,400 more young people living in high poverty communities hardest hit by the pandemic.** The primary objective for the program is to provide essential professional skills and entry-level work experience. Grantees of the program will partner with local businesses in need of summer employees. With the addition of Champaign, St. Clair, and Winnebago counties, IDHS is funding 30 projects in Champaign; Cook; Lake; Macon; McLean; Peoria; St. Clair; Stephenson; and Winnebago Counties.

## Immigrant Families

- IDHS established the COVID-19 Immigrant Family Support Program, providing up to \$1000 in support for low-income immigrant families in need of key resources, including food, housing, and utilities and for whom federal funding is not available.
- Expanded the COVID-19 Immigrant Family Support Program through FY 21.
- Increased capacity for Illinois Welcoming Centers to provide additional support services to immigrants and refugees highly impacted by COVID-19 including housing, rental and utility assistance.
- Increased capacity for the Illinois Immigrant Family Resource Program to provide COVID-19 and public benefits, information, interpretation and case management services.
- Establishing the COVID-19 Community Health Navigator program to provide information on COVID-19 testing, underlying health issues and where immigrant and refugee communities can access services.
  - Establishing a job training/retraining program for immigrants and refugees who lost their jobs or have reduced work hours due to COVID-19.
  - Launching a multilingual COVID-19 public awareness campaign.

## Abe Call Center

- This call center provides support for IDHS customers and helps them to apply for and manage their healthcare, food, and cash assistance benefits.
- IDHS increased capacity in the ABE Call Center; dramatically reducing call wait times and dropped calls for phone applications for medical, SNAP, and other benefits.





## Women, Infants & Children (WIC)

- WIC helps pregnant women, new mothers, and young children eat well and stay healthy through benefits enrollment, recertification, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to other services.
- Illinois WIC remains committed to serving families and continuing daily operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. WIC local agencies were given the flexibility to complete WIC appointments over the telephone.
  - These appointments include enrollment, recertification, nutrition education/issuing benefits, breastfeeding support, and referrals to other services. Currently, WIC operations will vary by region/WIC local agency, so please contact the local WIC clinic directly for additional details or questions.
- The WIC program is moving ahead with implementation of a new WIC information system with EBT capability despite the challenges associated with COVID-19. The WIC EBT card gives participants more flexibility in their shopping which is especially important during this pandemic.
- IDHS worked with the USDA to obtain waivers for specific food items to allow flexibility in the WIC shopping experience in the early stages of the pandemic.
- Use the [IDHS Office Locator](#) to find a local Women, Infants and Children office or contact the State WIC Office at **(217) 782-2166**.
  - The Family Case Management program provider network continues to contact low income pregnant women and those with infants to check in, ensure access to care, and conduct perinatal depression and developmental screenings.
- The WIC and Senior Farmer's Market Programs were able to secure waivers from the USDA to allow farmers with IDHS contracts to continue as approved farmers for the 2020 season. This ensures that over 400 farmers will be available to accept seasonal checks from July through October 2020 across Illinois.

## Housing and Shelter Resources

- IDHS increased funding for shelter services and programs to prevent homelessness and to support people experiencing housing uncertainty. IDHS developed one-page resource summaries in **English** and **Spanish**.
  - IDHS increased funding, launched a blanket exception to the two-year rule for assistance, allowed providers to help clients even if they were not at imminent risk of homelessness, relaxed eligibility qualifications, and increased rent assistance for up to six months' worth of rent.
  - **IDHS increased shelter services by \$6 million for emergency lodging. IDHS also increased existing FY20 funding by 5% for homelessness service providers to increase their capacity during this crisis.**

## Domestic Violence

- Those experiencing domestic violence and/or abuse, plus anyone concerned about a friend, family member, or loved one, can text or call the Illinois Domestic Violence hotline toll free at **1-877-TO-END-DV (1-877-863-6338)** to reach a multilingual trained Victim Information and Referral Advocate (VIRA) 24/7 or be connected to emergency shelter through community-based domestic violence programs, hotels, and motels.
- **IDHS dedicated \$1.2 million in Fiscal year 2020 to increase the capacity of its current, statewide network of services and to streamline access to emergency shelter for individuals and families impacted by domestic and sexual violence.**

## Human Trafficking

- IDHS developed a Lodging Services Human Trafficking Recognition Training curriculum, for lodging establishments. This curriculum will help train hotel and motel employees on how to identify and report Human Trafficking. More information, as well as the guide can be found here: <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=124138>

## Child Care

- IDHS administers the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) which provides low income families with financial support to allow them to access quality child care programs while they are at work or participating in training or education programs. During COVID, several provisions were put in place to support parents and providers:
  - IDHS automatically extended family eligibility for CCAP for an additional 6 months. The extension was automatic. No paperwork was required from the parents.
  - Parent copayments were waived during Phase 3 of the pandemic.
  - IDHS continued payments to providers even if attendance was low or the program was forced to close.
- IDHS continued to provide child care services through the Emergency Child Care Program. If an individual is deemed an "**Essential Worker**" during the COVID-19 emergency, they can find help securing child care by visiting: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Documents/Emergency%20Child%20Care%20Stipend%20Program.pdf>. A dedicated helpline (**1-888-228-1146**) was created to connect essential workers and families with emergency child care.
  - For persons who reside in Cook County, Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) has launched a new call center to answer CCAP questions during IAFC's office closure. Parents can call **312-823-1100** or text **312-736-7390**.
- Emergency child care programs were offered a free kit of PPE and cleaning supplies. Over 2,400 kits were delivered to programs serving children of essential workers.
- For residents in Cook County, Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) has launched a new call center to answer CCAP questions during IAFC's office closure. Parents can call **312-823-1100** or text **312-736-7390**.
- To address the shortage of qualified teachers, IDHS offered a free on line course to child care workers to obtain their Child Development Associate credential. Over 300 staff are participating in the program.
- **Governor Pritzker announced a \$270 million grant program for Illinois child care providers.** The Child Care Restoration grant program dedicates at least \$270 million of the state's Coronavirus Urgent Remediation Emergency (CURE) Fund to support the economic health of childcare providers as the state's economy continues to reopen. As part of CURE, the Business Interruption Grants (BIG) Program is specifically designed to support businesses who endure lost revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

## Early Intervention

- This program helps children between the ages of birth to three with disabilities or delays, to learn and grow. Infants and toddlers are evaluated to see if there is a delay in movement, learning, dealing with others, behavior, and/or self-help skills. If services are needed, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be written to set goals and identify needs. Families, with the support of Early Intervention Providers, help their infants and toddlers reach their goals.
- IDHS and the Department of Health and Family Services (HFS) implemented a first-ever teletherapy delivery model for Early Intervention.
  - During the pandemic, Early Intervention (EI) face-to-face services were suspended to reduce personal contact and to help flatten the curve. Because these services and their providers are vital to developing minds, IDHS and HFS, along with other stakeholders worked diligently to implement a Live Video Visit (teletherapy) delivery model. There is currently a dedicated workgroup of diverse stakeholders who are creating the plan to re-open EI in alignment with the phased approach of the Governor's Restore Illinois phased plan. EI providers continue to receive guidance on how to proceed, but if families or providers have additional questions, they are invited to reach out to their Office of Early Childhood Bureau of Early Intervention contact.

## Healthy Families Illinois (HFI)

- The Healthy Families Illinois (HFI) program continues to provide essential home visiting services to new and expectant parents, providing one-on-one support at no cost to eligible families. Home visiting activities help strengthen the bond between the parent and child to encourage the child's development. Home visitors can do developmental screenings, provide information on children's developmental milestones and early learning, connect parents to important community resources, and more. Even though HFI providers have suspended in-person home visits, they continue to offer virtual and phone visits, providing a lifeline to families navigating new challenges as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis. Parents can search for local HFI programs at the following website: [www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=32417](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=32417). The local programs can provide information on eligibility requirements and how to enroll.

## Empowering Impacted Communities

### Poverty Alleviation

- IDHS in partnership with the Governor's Office has identified funds in FY20 and FY21 to immediately, dramatically and, mitigate and alleviate poverty in Illinois, and quickly respond to the needs of Black, Brown and other hard-hit communities by COVID-19 and by the civil unrest.
- Up to \$4 million will be deployed to rebuild communities, providing stipends to unemployed adults to help rebuild businesses.
- Up to \$7 million to empower and engage youth to rebuild communities and build skills, by increasing funding to summer youth providers to help rebuild businesses.
- \$2 million to increase capacity to feed hungry families by increasing funding to Food Banks in the hardest hit areas for additional commodities and food and/or to support local food pantries.
- \$1 million to invest in Black and Brown farmers, to increase the availability of fresh food and produce and to support Illinois Black and Brown farmers.
- \$2 million to support crisis mental health services, by increasing funding for crisis support mental health services providers to meeting the increased demand for a) support crisis triage services to determine level of care, b) offer additional crisis services to individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis, and c) begin to build capacity to better serve diverse communities.
- \$5 million for Healing Illinois, to provide small grants to community-based organizations to hold healing circles, restorative justice circles, and other healing activities.
- \$12.7 million to provide resources to families in need, by providing a one-time \$500 payment or "state stimulus" check for TANF families. This one-time state stimulus payment reached 25,493 TANF Households in Illinois.

## Investing for Community Equity

- In addition to the 'Empowering Impacted communities', IDHS and the Governor's office laid out a set of programs that would serve and prioritize communities across the state that have the highest COVID-19 cases and fatalities. These strategies will meet the basic needs: housing, jobs and job training, food, physical and behavioral health, education.
- The strategies seek to resource and engage faith-based and other local community-based organizations and build capacity in traditional organizations to better serve and employ the under and un-employed.
  - **Up to \$3.9 million for housing financial support** for rent, mortgage and utility assistance to prevent Illinois low-income, underemployed/unemployed and hard-hit by COVID-19 from becoming homeless.
  - **Up to \$10.5 million to provide Employment and Training** services for those unemployed and underemployed due to COVID-19. IDHS is working with faith-based institutions, community based organizations serving the highest hit COVID-19 areas.
  - **Up to \$3 million to bring health resources to the areas hardest hit by COVID-19, such as mobile health units, community health navigators and health education forums.**
  - **Up to \$2 million to address food deserts** in the highest hit COVID-19 areas. IDHS is working with faith based institutions and community based organizations to increase food pantry capacity and community gardens to provide fresh and healthy foods.
  - **Up to \$6 million for the Youth Employment and Education Program (YEEP)** to "make-up" for missing in-class instruction; partner with recent graduates unable to find employment to tutor younger students.
  - **Up to \$1 million to address behavioral health services, treatment services and supports for unfunded individuals who have experienced COVID-19 losses and need mental health treatment.**
  - **Up to \$1.6 million for behavioral health: promote and train organizations on different trauma-informed care approaches**, including impact on both physical and psychological health, attached to recovery support services that can connect people and their families to healthcare services and mental health services

# Developmental Disabilities

## Non-Discrimination

- The Governor's Office and several State agencies, including IDHS, collaborated on "Guidance Relating to Non-Discrimination in Medical Treatment for Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)" which is [here](#).

## Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Hospital Guidance

- With input from IDHS, IDPH issued guidance clarifying that healthcare facilities (including hospitals) should allow patients with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities or cognitive impairments to be accompanied by a support person determined to be essential to their care, such as a guardian, family member, caregiver, or paid support worker. See the full guidance [here](#).

## Crisis Management and Stability Support for Community Providers

- The IDHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) built a robust staff unit, led by the Bureau of Community Services, to field calls from providers, individuals, family members, and service coordinators to problem solve individual issues, agency staffing challenges, organizational instability, and individual and family concerns. The unit tracked and responded to hundreds of issues and inquiries during the Stay at Home order and provided guidance to stabilize agencies and address individual issues.
- The DDD developed a specific COVID-19 webpage for all DDD communications, information bulletins, resources, and guidance which you can find [here](#).

## 24/7 FACILITY CHANGES (DD & DMH)

- Caring for people in IDHS 24/7 facilities requires hands-on care, which makes it impossible to implement complete social distancing. It is also sometimes challenging for IDHS residents to adhere to all of the protective measures that the agency is taking. However, IDHS implemented many new protocols at all of the agency's developmental and mental health centers across the state to address the virus, including



- All non-essential visitors were restricted from entering. Facilities arranged for video and telephone calls between residents/patients and family as readily available and as frequently as possible.
- Temperature checks for all staff and residents/patients at shift changes were initiated. Residents/patients who exhibited signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to the same were placed in isolation.
- An Infectious Disease team for IDHS's 24/7 facilities, including existing infectious disease control staff, was formed.
- Regular staff training was conducted regarding sanitation and hand hygiene (including enhanced cleaning of frequently touched surfaces) and staff were provided with personal protective equipment (PPE), in consultation with IDPH.
- Expansion of telehealth capabilities to allow physicians and social workers to complete assessments and provide treatment to residents/patients remotely.
- New admissions were admitted to observations units where they were evaluated for risk of COVID-19 exposure and assessed for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to transfer to an assigned treatment unit.
- Weekly medical meetings were held via WebEx with all physicians and nurses from MH and DD to inform them of changes to COVID-19-related policy and to provide the latest information from CDC and IDPH.

## **Adult & Children's Medicaid Waiver Services**

- The DDD developed our Appendix K for HFS submission to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to modify existing waivers to provide temporary changes across the services, as well as accompanying Information Bulletins to providers:
  - Staff qualified under any service definition in any of the DDD waivers were allowed to provide any other non-professional service under any other service definition. This encouraged redeployment of staff as DSPs to prevent staffing shortages..
  - Healthcare professionals licensed in other states were allowed to perform reimbursable services.
  - Therapeutic services could be provided remotely.
  - Independent Service Coordination (ISC), personal plan development, and monitoring could be provided remotely.
  - Extended deadlines for certification, licensure, life safety code, quality assessment, audits, fiscal reporting requirements, etc.
  - Electronic signatures were acceptable.
- **Community Day Services (CDS)**
  - **Closed CDS sites and issued retainer payments to CDS providers based on a 6-month average monthly billing.**
- **Community Integrated Living Arrangements (CILA)**
  - **Rates for children and adults funded for 24-hour shift staff and Foster Care/Host Family models adjusted to account and pay for the hours usually deducted for CDS services.**
  - **Provided an additional 10% to 24-Hour CILA per-diem to cover increased staffing and other costs.**
  - Allowed individuals receiving intermittent CILA services to receive an additional 15 hours of funded support
- **Home Based Support Services**
  - Temporarily increased the Children's Waiver allotment to equal the amount an individual in the Adult Waiver would receive. This allowed the individual to purchase additional support hours to compensate for the time school was closed.
  - Parents of children in the Children's Waiver were allowed to enroll as a Personal Support Workers (PSW).
  - PSWs could be reimbursed for services provided while an individual was in the hospital.

## **Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (ICF/DD)**

- **Provided 20% increase to rates as part of the emergency State Plan Amendment to cover the staffing hours traditionally provided by Community Day Services.**
- Worked closely with IDPH to communicate LTC guidance and applicability to ICF/DD settings.

## DD Grant Funded programs

- Provided retainer payments for services that were ceased or delivered in a lesser capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Allowed for voucher respite to be provided to families that chose to take their loved one home from a residential placement during the Stay at Home Order.

## Rehabilitation Services

### Toll-Free Line

- The closure of IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) physical offices led to the creation of a toll-free number (**1-877-581-3690**) to assist customers, vendors, and stakeholders with vocational support or home services information.

### Home Services Program (HSP)

- The HSP provides services to individuals with severe disabilities so they can remain in their homes and be as independent as possible.
- Throughout the pandemic, the Home Services Program (HSP) made a number of temporary changes to benefit participants:
  - **Emergency Provider Program** The Home Services Program has contracted with the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL) to provide short-term emergency providers to assist customers during their time of need. They can assist with daily living tasks, much like a personal assistant for immediate and short-term needs.
  - **Phone Assessments** Counselors may contact customers via telephone to complete annual redeterminations that previously had to be in-person.
  - **Increasing Respite Hours** Respite service hours have traditionally been limited to 20 hours/month, 240 hours per calendar year. This change will increase the number of hours per month/year, based on need.
  - **Allowing Family Members to be a Paid Provider** Previously prohibited, legally responsible family members (spouses, parents/guardians of minors) are now able to become paid providers because of the difficulty in hiring new providers in the wake of this pandemic, either due to real or perceived fears of COVID-19. This includes help with eating, bathing, grooming, dressing, bowel and bladder care, transferring, and routine and special health care needs.

## Mental Health

### Call 4 Calm

- The IDHS Division of Mental Health (DMH) launched "Call4Calm," a free emotional support (non-crisis) text line designed to support Illinoisans experiencing stress related to COVID-19. People can text "TALK" (or "HABLAR" for Spanish) to **552020** to receive a call from a caring counselor from a community mental health center who can be a listening ear for the challenges people are currently experiencing.

The text tool can also help Illinoisans find help and guidance on other critical issues during the pandemic. Residents can text questions about topics such as "UNEMPLOYMENT," "FOOD," or "SHELTER," to 552020 to receive additional information in response.

### Illinois Warm Line Expanded Hours

- The Warm Line (**1-866-359-7953**) is a phone-based emotional support service for Illinois residents, staffed by Wellness Support Specialists, professionals who have experienced mental health and/or substance use recovery in their own lives. They are trained in recovery support, mentoring, and advocacy. In response to an increased need for emotional support during the COVID-19 crisis, service hours for the Illinois Warm Line were expanded to 8am-8pm Monday through Saturday.

## Residential Services

- More than 5,000 individuals in Illinois rely on residential-based services for their mental health care and substance use prevention and recovery services and ensuring the continued and safe operation of these entities has been a priority for DMH and the Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery (SUPR). This has included:
  - Funding increases to ensure access to PPE, cleaning materials, and increased staffing ratios to provide adequate care for individuals in need of quarantine.
  - Identification and sharing of resources from the Illinois Department of Public Health as well as the CDC on safe operation, policies, and procedures.

## Consent Decree Programs

- The Williams and Colbert Consent Decree Class Members have some of the most intensive service needs of adults with Serious Mental Illnesses in Illinois. To ensure that they maintained access to necessary services and supports, DMH allowed providers to utilize grant funds to purchase:
  - Telehealth equipment
  - PPE
  - Smart technology and data plans for Class Members
  - Further supports to Class Members for needs within the community.

## Ensuring the Community Safety Net

- The community mental health system consists of more than 200 individual provider agencies who provide ongoing access to treatment services and supports for individuals with mental illnesses and emotional disturbances, statewide.
- These providers quickly responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by restructuring their service delivery to maintain safety of their staff and individuals served.
- DMH adapted many policies and procedures to support these temporary changes in operation, ensuring that the resources of providers could remain focused on the provision of direct care to individuals. This included:
  - The extension of contracts for FY21 that had originally been scheduled for competitive NOFO.
  - Fiscal procedures to keep providers whole through potential loss of revenue and/or increased operational costs due to COVID-19.
  - Suspending fidelity reviews and refocusing our fidelity reviewers on supportive technical assistance functions.
  - Providing daily updates to our website with resources for operating during this challenging time.

## Substance Use Prevention and Recovery

### Recovery Support

- For those struggling with recovery, IDHS gathered extensive digital recovery support resources, so that people can connect virtually with the support networks that are crucial to their well-being and recovery efforts. Illinois residents can access these services 24/7 by visiting [dhs.illinois.gov/helpishere](https://dhs.illinois.gov/helpishere) and choosing "recovery," or by calling **1-833-2-FIND-HELP**.



## Other Programs/Activities

### Personal Protective Equipment

- IDHS, in conjunction with three statewide partner organizations, distributed 500,000 KN95 surgical masks to community-based residential providers, free of charge, across the state.

### Partnering with Labor

- **Safety Precautions and Protections:** IDHS partnered with AFSCME to issue agreed-upon safety precautions and protections for both its 24/7 facilities and its open local offices.
- **Return to the Workplace:** Through Reinvent IDHS, Restore Illinois, IDHS is partnering with its union colleagues to discuss the gradual, safe, and responsible return of some of the currently remote IDHS staff to the workplace.

### Staffing

- **Mental Health Tech Trainees:** The Bureau of Human Resources partnered with the Illinois Department of Central Management Services to allow increased hiring, with an expedited qualifications assessment, but without on-site physical or written tests made impossible by the pandemic.
- **Retirees:** The Bureau of Human Resources successfully returned many retirees to support IDHS's COVID-19 efforts, particularly at its 24/7 facilities.
- **Contract Support:** While IDHS continues to increase and to first prioritize hiring, it both independently and in partnership with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, IDHS brought on contractual staffing support in the interim.

### IT

- **Moving IDHS to Remote Work:** The IDHS/DoIT IT team successfully moved a tremendous segment of the IDHS workforce to remote work, who had not worked remotely before. This included loading, distributing, and supporting hundreds of laptops for local office case workers and new ABE call center workers, supporting thousands of IDHS workers to be able to work remotely on their own computers, supporting the Citrix system demands, and troubleshooting to allow staff to access the necessary databases.
- **Revamping the IDHS Website:** Working closely with the IDHS Communications team, IDHS/DoIT revamped the IDHS website to make it easier to navigate for customers, providers, and others during this elevated time of need for IDHS services.

### IDHS Office of the Inspector General

- **Returning 24/7 Staff From Administrative Leave:** The IDHS OIG partnered with the Divisions of Developmental Disabilities and of Mental Health, through Governor Pritzker's Executive Order 2020-24, to return much-needed staff to IDHS's 24/7 facilities, whose investigations are materially complete and will not be substantiated or, even if substantiated, whose alleged conduct would not result in referral to the Health Care Worker Registry.

### Census

- The Census Bureau extended the window for field data collection and self-responses to October 31, 2020.