

Dear Family Member,

I'm writing to inform you of a recent policy initiative by the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) that includes plans to enter certified residences at a time when the state's no-visitor policy is still in effect.

AccessCNY feels it is not responsible to open our homes to OPWDD staff at a time when family members and other visitors are not allowed to enter, and will not allow OPWDD staff into our residences as part of their COVID-19 Risk Stratified Enhanced Oversight Process.

The May 18 OPWDD memorandum outlining the process is included in this communication.

The health and safety of your family member is our utmost priority, and we welcome assistance from, and oversight by, the State in that endeavor. But the State's decision to send multiple staff into hundreds of homes during the COVID-19 crisis is one that carries with it unnecessary risk when the simple alternative of virtual observation is readily available.

The no-visitor policy is in effect for good reason. The risk of infection among people in congregate settings is higher than among the general public and limiting your family member's exposure to potential risks is the best defense we have during this pandemic. Allowing unnecessary survey traffic at the same time families and other visitors are not allowed into our homes runs counter to the policies the State has set.

This does not mean that AccessCNY will not comply with the other components of OPWDD's COVID-19 Risk Stratified Enhanced Oversight Process. We will be able to submit policies and other documentation to demonstrate procedures that keeps residents and staff in the homes safe from potential infection. We also will offer assistance by our staff in the homes, so that OPWDD can virtually observe our infection control practices without entering the homes.

If you think the in-home visits pose an unnecessary risk, you should let OPWDD know that you oppose this initiative and respectfully ask that virtual observation replace that plan so that their family members and their support staff aren't unnecessarily put at risk.

Please send emails expressing your objections to on-site visits to quality@opwdd.ny.gov or call Leslie Fuld, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Quality Improvement, OPWDD at 518-474-4308.

Sincerely,



Paul Joslyn, Executive Director