



Department of Job and Family Services

Mike DeWine, Governor
Kimberly Hall, Director

March 25, 2020

TO: Child and Family Health Collaborative of Ohio
FROM: Jana Pearce, Bridges Program Administrator
SUBJECT: **Bridges Flexibility Guidance for COVID-19**

On March 9, 2020, Governor DeWine issued Executive Order 2020-01D which declared a state of emergency in Ohio due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, orders were issued by the Ohio Department of Health's Director impacting schools, businesses, and child care facilities in addition to a stay at home order. These orders will have a significant impact on Bridges and those young adults served by the program.

The guidance below details how to proceed during this time and will remain in effect until the state of emergency has been lifted.

Engagement:

The 30-day home visit requirement remains in place, but policy is modified to permit such visits be conducted by videoconferencing. If staff or the Bridges participant is unable to participate in the home visit via videoconferencing, then an in-person visit must occur. A home visit held via videoconferencing must be documented in the SACWIS Activity Log as relative to COVID-19.

Bridges providers are also encouraged to take advantage of virtual options for additional engagement that would otherwise occur in person. Virtual options include texting, phone calls, and social media direct messaging. Please note that if staff use text messaging or direct messaging through social media, they must use encrypted applications. If engagement would have typically occurred in person, staff will need to document in the SACWIS Activity Log as relative to COVID-19.

Verbal Signatures:

Signature requirements remain in place, but policy is modified to permit verbal signatures for Bridges Application, Bridges Voluntary Participation Agreement (VPA), Bridges Plan, and Bridges Review when an electronic signature or in-person signature cannot be captured.

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Prior to accepting a verbal signature, staff are required to read the contents of the document being signed. For the Bridges Application, all fields must be reviewed to ensure all information is accurate and current. For the Bridges VPA, all responsibilities must be reviewed to ensure the applicant understands the expectations of the program. For the Bridges Plan and Review, all goals and activities must be reviewed. A copy of the document should be provided to the individual as soon as possible.

The individual signing must provide a written attestation, either through email or text message, using “On [Insert date], I, [Insert your name], provided a verbal signature to the [Insert document name(s)]. I attest this document was reviewed with me, and I understand what I have signed.”

Verbal signatures must be documented in the SACWIS Activity Log using “On [Insert date], [Insert individual name] provided a verbal signature to the [Insert document name(s)]. A copy of the [Insert document name(s)] will be provided to the individual as soon as possible.”

Eligibility

Programmatic eligibility requirements remain in place, but policy is modified to account for the impact of loss of job or a decrease in hours, school and program closures, lack of child care due to daycare closures, and inability to meet with a qualified practitioner. Staff will need to document all COVID-19 impact in a SACWIS Activity Log explaining how the individual’s Bridges eligibility is impacted.

All individuals interested in applying for Bridges must be able to demonstrate how they meet program eligibility. If this is currently impacted by COVID-19, then they must be able to show a history of meeting program eligibility requirements within the past 60 days. Once the State of Emergency has lifted, those individuals enrolled in Bridges during this time will have 60 calendar days to provide current documentation verifying eligibility to remain in the program. Those unable to provide the required documentation will be terminated at the end of the 60-calendar day period.

For those individuals who are unable to demonstrate meeting program requirements at application, staff are required to refer them to CCMEP and to the PCSA for post emancipation services. Staff will work with the individual for no less than 30 days to assist in gaining programmatic eligibility.

All individuals currently enrolled in Bridges must be able to demonstrate how they continue to meet program eligibility. For participants unable to meet ongoing eligibility requirements due to COVID-19 impact (loss of job or a decrease in hours; school and program closures; lack of child care due to daycare closures; unable to meet with their qualified practitioner), ongoing eligibility requirements are waived. Once the State of Emergency has lifted, participants will have 60 calendar days to regain eligibility. Those unable to regain eligibility will be terminated at the end of the 60-calendar day period.

For those participants who are unable to regain eligibility, and are subsequently terminated, staff are required to refer them to CCMEP and to the PCSA for post emancipation services.