

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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March 25, 2021

TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES FINAL RULE: VIRTUAL SITE ASSESSMENTS

Background

The Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Final Rule ensures individuals have full access to the benefits of community living and the opportunity to receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate. The rule applies to services provided to individuals with developmental disabilities through California's regional center system.

The [California Statewide Transition Plan \(Plan\)](#) outlines the state's plan to be in compliance with the HCBS Final Rule. The provider self-assessment survey for residential and non-residential programs measured a provider's current level of compliance with the HCBS Final Rule. [Statewide compliance reporting data](#) as of September 01, 2020, can be found on the HCBS Final Rule Assessment Information page. Despite hardships presented by multiple states of emergencies in California throughout the last year, the provider self-assessment survey reflected 80% completion rate through the efforts of providers and regional center staff.

Virtual Site Assessment

The next step outlined in the plan is on-site assessment. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) contracted with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to conduct on-site assessments of a randomized, statistically valid sample of 1,200 HCBS providers among all 21 regional centers. Due to COVID-19 State of Emergency, on-site assessments will be conducted virtually to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved in the process.

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PCG conducted a “pilot” to establish the most effective process for conducting virtual site assessments. The pilot phase included three regional centers and a variety of service types. The pilot assessments are completed and reports for each visit are underway. Statewide virtual site assessments will begin following receipt of the following from regional centers. **By March 31, 2021, or as soon as possible, please provide a regional center point of contact (name and email)**, if someone other than the HCBS Program Evaluator or HCBS Specialist that should be included, to hcbsregs@dds.ca.gov. Regional center staff will be included on each initial email that PCG sends to selected providers.

PCG will contact each selected provider first via email, followed by a phone call to schedule a virtual site assessment. The email to providers will include attachments to assist in preparation such as how to set up the technology to be used, a letter explaining the process, and FAQs. Attached are copies of the documents (Enclosures 1 and 2) that PCG will be sending should providers seek to verify authenticity.

The virtual site assessment is meant to be a discussion about how services are being provided, both currently and prior to the COVID-19 State of Emergency. Along with a tour of the provider setting site, the assessment process will include an interview of a person that currently receives services from the provider. Collecting input from individuals on their experience is necessary to ensure services are individualized and person-centered. PCG will analyze the information that they gather from the virtual site assessment and provide DDS with a report identifying areas to improve upon and recommendations on how those areas can be improved. DDS will share reports with regional centers once approved.

Webinar

The Department will hold two, one-hour webinars to review the virtual site assessment process and answer questions from regional centers and providers. The webinars will be held on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, from 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. and Wednesday, April 7, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. To register for either of the webinars, follow the instructions found at <https://www.dds.ca.gov/initiatives/cms-hcbs-regulations/assessment-information/>.

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If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact hcbsregs@dds.ca.gov. This letter, and additional information regarding the assessment process will be posted to the Department's website at <https://www.dds.ca.gov/initiatives/cms-hcbs-regulations/assessment-information/>.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:

MARICRIS ACON
Deputy Director
Federal Programs Division

Enclosures

cc: Regional Center Administrators
Regional Center Community Services Directors
Regional Center Directors of Consumer Services
Regional Center HCBS Program Evaluators
Association of Regional Center Agencies
State Council on Developmental Disabilities
HCBS Advisory Group
Brian Winfield, Department of Developmental Services
Jim Switzgale, Department of Developmental Services
Erica Reimer Snell, Department of Developmental Services