

Respite Services

Frequently Asked Questions

3/19/2020

1. Question: Is respite an essential service?

Answer: Essential services are those which support an individual to live successfully in the community and will support their health and safety. Many people that are served rely on respite or have a respite care provider whose consistency provides stability for the individual served. Determination of whether respite is essential for an individual will require a conversation with the individual and the family. SARC wants to ensure we are not challenging the Shelter in Place order while also giving maximum flexibility to determine if services are essential. SARC feels confident the provider can determine what is essential and what is non-essential. The determination of essential or non-essential should be communicated with the Service Coordinator.

2. Question: Can individuals and their staff be outside of the individual's home?

Answer: Walks and exercise may be important for the health and safety needs of the individual. We ask that you follow the Shelter in Place order for limited outings and social distancing. For more specific information related to each county, please go here: [Shelter in Place](#).

3. Question: What should a service provider do if an individual requires additional respite?

Answer: Service providers or family members should communicate the increased need to the individual's Service Coordinator. Flexibility in authorizing additional hours has been increased to ensure supervision and care for individuals during this time.

4. Question: If the primary care provider is working from home, can the individual continue to receive daycare?

Answer: If the service provider classifies day care as an essential service, this service may continue. However, you should consult with the SARC Service Coordinator.

5. Question: Can respite agencies begin serving new individuals?

Answer: If a Service Coordinator refers a new individual, you may serve this individual. Standard services, such as day program, have been instructed to hold new referrals.

Staff and Staffing Questions:

6. Question: How should respite providers prepare staff for visiting individuals:

Answer: Provider staff should take all steps on the CDC checklist, including asking family members if they are experiencing symptoms, including fever and persistent cough. Providers should develop a plan of support for each client and a contingency plan in the event staff are not able to attend to critical services. Staff should call and ask about the health status of all individuals in the home before each shift.

7. Question: Can SARC provide a badge or other document for service provider staff to verify they are providing essential services when they are in the community?

Answer: No, SARC cannot issue badges to providers for their staff. For staff who are concerned about being stopped in the community (whether during travel to and from their work site or on essential community outings with individuals), service providers may want to draft a letter on their agency's letterhead with the staff's name and the classification of their essential business and essential services.

Documentation Questions:

8. Question: What information do service providers need to send to SARC to ensure they will be able to bill for absences, essential services, and non-essential services?

Answer: For services that are or may be considered essential, SARC is requesting:

- A list of the individuals the service provider is currently serving
- A contingency plan for any staffing issues that may arise

For services that are not considered essential and will be temporarily suspended, SARC will fund these services for individuals following the Shelter in Place orders if providers submit the requested documentation. Service providers must provide SARC:

- A copy of the letter sent to individuals and families
- A list of the individuals currently served

9. Question: What should be included in the client list I send to SARC?

Answer: Please include the individual's name, UCI number, service type, and whether the individual is receiving essential services or non-essential services. If you have already sent the list of clients, we will work with the list you have sent. Please send this information to soe@sarc.org.

Billing Questions:

10. Question: Will providers be able to bill if they determine that an individual's services are non-essential?

Answer: If you have determined that your services are non-essential, you will be able to bill for missed hours in relation to COVID-19 if the absence is greater than the average number of missed days in a 12 month period. Please be sure to maintain documentation during this time, which would include a list of individuals that are affected and the hours that are missed.

11. Question: Will service providers be able to bill for absences in relation to COVID-19?

Answer: Service providers should track all absences due to COVID-19 whether it is prior to the Shelter in Place order or following the order. Providers will be required to provide documentation so it is important that documentation reflects that an absence was in relation to COVID-19. Absences can be

billed only if the number of absences is greater than the average number of missed days in a 12 month period.

12. Question: Can a service provider bill for services when a respite care provider is unable to work due to symptoms of COVID-19 or the need to care for a child out of school.

Answer: If the care provider cancels, the service provider cannot bill and cannot be reimbursed for the days they cancel.

13. Question: What is the procedure for e-billing?

Answer: Please reference the [Letter to Service Providers – State of Emergency](#) on our website. Service providers should document the individual they are referencing, shifts that were missed, and indicate it is related to COVID-19. Service providers should add a comment in the e-billing system as instructed on the aforementioned *Letter to Service Providers*.

14. Question: Is there a date from which service providers are able to start billing for absences and non-essential services?

Answer: Absences from an open program related to COVID-19 can be billed for beginning March 4, 2020, the date of the Governor's State of Emergency declaration, only if the absence was related to COVID-19 and greater than the average absence over the past 12 months. Non-essential services can be billed for beginning March 17 for Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties and March 18 for Monterey and San Benito Counties.