



# Disability Advocacy Alliance

June 9, 2020

Director Jeff Davis  
Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities  
30 East Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Director Davis,

Ohioans want to return to work. They need income, but they also need the health benefits that come from putting their talents to work in a productive fashion and interacting with colleagues. Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who attend Vocational Habilitation and Adult Day Support programs are no different. They are anxious to resume their lives and partake in the activities that allow them to contribute to society and enhance their well-being.

We are concerned that some policies for opening Vocational Habilitation and Adult Day Support programs are overly restrictive. They place onerous requirements on employers of workers with I/DD that are not required of Ohio employers who employ primarily non-disabled people. These requirements are direct impediments to opportunities for Ohioans with I/DD, as they prevent some workplaces from resuming operations. The following create significant hurdles to Vocational Habilitation employers and Adult Day providers:

1. The requirement that each small work group has a separate entrance
2. The requirement that each small work group has a separate bathroom

It is not clear why these additional limitations are being placed on Vocational Habilitation employers and Adult Day providers, but it is clear that it will be impossible for some providers to meet the requirements, or if they do, they will only do so by severely limiting the numbers of people they can employ or serve. Providers are experts in the care of individuals with I/DD.

**The safest way to resume services is to include these experts in re-opening planning.** Providers can offer alternative solutions that address health and safety and enable programs to resume. Therefore, we urge DODD to work with Vocational Habilitation and Adult Day providers on a wider basis to establish workable solutions so that individuals with I/DD who are capable and willing can return to work.

DD families are fully aware of the financial pressures the pandemic has placed on providers. If programs are forced to close because the DD System did not provide a pathway for them to resume operations, the opportunities and friendships that our disabled children and family members look forward to each and everyday will be taken from them forever. We reach out to you, therefore, with the welfare of our family members at the forefront of our hearts and minds. We have heard the warning, "Don't let the cure be worse than the problem." If providers are forced to close, the cure will be unduly harsh. Ultimately, it will be our loved ones with I/DD who will pay the dearest price in reduced health and quality of life.

We have been told, "We are all in this together." Please show us that we truly are by collaborating with providers to develop workable solutions so that your constituents who are capable and willing can return to work and resume their lives.

Thank you for your leadership and service to Ohioans during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caroline A. Lahrmann". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light beige rectangular background.

Caroline A. Lahrmann  
Disability Advocacy Alliance

CC: Senate President Larry Obhof  
Speaker of the House of Representatives Larry Householder  
Senate Committee on Health, Human Services & Medicaid  
House Finance Subcommittee on Health & Human Services