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DEPARTMENT FOR MEDICAID SERVICES

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Lisa Lee
COMMISSIONER

To: Community Mental Health Centers
Acquired Brain Injury Case Managers
Model II Waiver Providers

From: Pam Smith
Director, Division of Long-Term Services

Date: December 19, 2022

Re: COVID-19 and Assessments

On March 16, 2020, the Department for Medicaid Services (DMS) directed assessors for all 1915(c) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver programs to begin conducting assessments via phone or virtual options to protect against the spread of COVID-19. Nearly three years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the widespread availability of precautionary measures such as vaccines and face masks mean in-person assessments can safely resume for most participants.

While DMS is directing assessors to resume in-person assessments at this time, we recognize COVID-19 continues to circulate across Kentucky and still poses a serious risk to many individuals. When conducting assessments in-person, assessors should take steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 by following Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance regarding masks and in-person gatherings and observing social distancing. For example, an assessment could take place outside on the porch or patio of a participant's residence to reduce the risk to all parties in attendance. Kentucky's COVID-19 Appendix K amendment for HCBS waivers is still in effect. Appendix K allows telephonic and virtual assessments; however, it does not prohibit in person visits. Telephonic and virtual assessments can still be conducted when requested by the participant due to their risk for COVID-19.

In-person assessments allow the assessor to make observations about the participant's home environment and well-being that sometimes cannot be noted using virtual or telephonic options, such as cleanliness or how it smells. If conducting an assessment virtually, the participant should be on-camera and be seen clearly. The assessor should observe the participant's condition, ask detailed questions, and request to see anything that can give them a clear idea of the participant's functional abilities.

Appendix K will remain in place for up to six months after the federal public health emergency is discontinued. There will be a transition period for providers to return to normal waiver

operations. DMS will issue guidance once a final date for the end of the federal public health emergency is determined.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pam Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pam Smith
Director, Division of Community Alternatives