

**From:** Tammy Mahan [<mailto:tmahan@lifepathsystems.org>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 1, 2020 12:46 PM  
**To:** Bill Bilyeu <[bbilyeu@co.collin.tx.us](mailto:bbilyeu@co.collin.tx.us)>  
**Subject:** FW: Infection Control at Long Term Care Facilities ##

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Bill,

Just FYI – I sent the email below to the commissioners.

I had sent a version of this to Cheryl Williams earlier today and she just asked that I forward it to the other commissioners.

I'm working on that letter – waiting to get consistent messaging from the Texas Council.

On your other questions from earlier:

- The annual budget for each group home is around \$450,000. The majority of that is in salaries & benefits.
- We have 4 group homes. I'm not sure how many other homes are in our county as there are private providers and they are independent from LifePath.

Thanks for your help.

Tammy Mahan, MA, LPC-S  
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*Building stronger communities, person by person.*

**From:** Tammy Mahan  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 1, 2020 12:31 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Infection Control at Long Term Care Facilities ##

I'd like to make you all aware of a growing concern that we have at LifePath Systems.

LifePath Systems has 4 Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDD) group homes, each housing 4 to 6 individuals. These homes provide long term residential care to individuals with mental retardation. Many also have underlying medical conditions which increase their risk for more severe complications from COVID-19.

We receive Medicaid funding through the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (funded through IDD ICF and IDD HSC programs) to run these facilities. However, the reimbursement rates are

based on a direct care provider (the people that work in the homes caring for the individuals) earning \$8.50 per hour. We currently pay our direct care staff \$10 per hour and have taken a loss in these programs over the past several years. Even at \$10 per hour, *many of our staff must work multiple jobs at multiple long term care facilities.*

Our effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 into our group homes has included the following precautions:

- No visitation to facilities. Residents are not allowed to leave facility.
- All staff working in the facilities have temperatures taken before each shift. Staff with any illness symptoms are not allowed to work.
- Increased hand washing of staff and residents and increased cleaning of facilities.
- Other LifePath staff do all of the grocery shopping for the group homes in order to minimize staff needing to leave/return to facility.

In the attached order from Dallas County, it is specifies that:

4. If an LTCF has any resident with a diagnoses of COVID-19, the LTCF shall institute the following measures within the same level of care:
  - a. All health care personnel must wear masks for patient care, and must have temperature and symptom checks prior to each shift. If a worker has a temperature above 99.6 degrees Fahrenheit, then they are prohibited from going to work and must remain at their residence;
  - b. The facility will be closed to new admissions and will also close all services, including outpatient rehabilitation.
  - c. **Any and all of the staff at the LTCF shall not work at any LTCFs other than the impacted LTCF,** and the administrator any LTCF shall keep a list of all employees who have worked at any other LTCFs, including the name and contact information for the administrator at the other LTCF.

While I know that we do not have to follow these Dallas County guidelines, the plan of restricting staff from working at multiple long term care facilities is a good plan to prevent cross contamination. However, we are unable to enforce this unless we pay direct care staff significantly more per hour (at least \$15/hr) so that they don't have to work at multiple sites. If I enacted this rule now, I would not have enough staff to provide 24 hour care as required in these homes.

This need to increase both IDD ICF and IDD HSC group home rates has been brought to HHSC leadership. We need local support to encourage HHSC to raise these rates. Other states have already increased these rates by as much as 50% to deal with this crisis. I am reaching out to legislative offices as well.

I spoke with Bill Bilyeu and he suggested I draft a letter for each of you to review and sign and send to the Acting Executive Commissioner of HHSC, Phil Wilson. I am in the process of drafting that letter. I am awaiting a summary of the talking points from the Texas Council of Community Centers (our trade association) so that I use language similar to other advocacy groups so that we are all speaking in unison on this topic.

If you have any questions, please let me know. I plan to get the letter to Bill as soon as I can. I would appreciate any support you could provide to help us keep our group homes safe.

Thank you,

Tammy Mahan, MA, LPC-S  
Chief Executive Officer

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