

March 2020



Dear Partners,

Every moment, I am inspired and buoyed by our resilient, kind, and strong human services leaders, workers, and system during this time of great need. Others are turning to us in this moment for answers, relief, comfort, and basic needs – and we have stepped up and will continue to do so. Thank you.

On March 16, [I wrote you](#) to provide reassurance regarding IDHS-supported programs and services as we move through these unprecedented times. I want to reiterate my commitment and to clarify our intentions about how to sustain and support the human services network during this national pandemic. I want to thank you for your ongoing role in meeting the needs of our community members.

Here are the broad intentions/essence of the three principles I shared:

- **If you have had to slow or stop services during this emergency, your funding from IDHS will be sustained, to the maximum extent possible.** You will receive further direction from our Division Directors or program staff in the near future for organizations with active contracts or service agreements on reporting expectations.
- **Staff who work for your organizations should continue to be paid and supported.** Our system needs to remain intact and strong for the coming days and months. The details of how to ensure this will be communicated from your Divisions.
- **Organizations taking on increased public responsibility during this time may receive additional funding commensurate with the temporary reorganization of services.** Again, our Division Directors or program staff will be in touch in the near future with more clarification.

My team is working nonstop to ensure that we can live up to these commitments. We know there are many questions – and we ask for your patience and partnership as we put our best judgment into practice. This is an daunting time for all of us – and I want you to know you are not alone.

For your awareness, I want to also share the most recent news about our offices that are currently closed or operating differently to ensure we are working in accordance with current CDC guidelines.

- Division of Rehabilitation Services' (DRS) offices are closed effective Thursday, March 19th until early April. Current DRS customers can call their local offices and phones will be directed to staff working remotely, and both current and new customers can use our website, www.DRS.illinois.gov/apply.

- Family Community Resource Centers are open with reduced staff. On a rotating basis, some staff are working remotely and can continue processing customer benefits, and some staff are remaining to work at our offices to see customers. We will be working in accordance with CDC guidelines on social distancing to the best of our ability in our open offices. **We highly encourage customers to use our website, [ABE.illinois.gov](https://www.abe.illinois.gov), to apply for and to manage their benefits, or to call the ABE call center at 1-800-843-6154 to reduce crowds and to keep people in their homes.**

There are an array of other program announcements that are posted on our website. We will continue to share and post [public communications](#) in the coming days and weeks. Additional information is available at a new state resource, [coronavirus.illinois.gov](https://www.coronavirus.illinois.gov), and at the COVID-19 Hotline: 1-800-889-3931.

Thank you for continuing to serve in whatever way you can. Please direct questions, comments, or concerns regarding IDHS-specific matters to our staff directly or through DHS.COVID19@illinois.gov.

Stay in touch and take care.

Sincerely,

Grace B. Hou
Secretary, IDHS