



## DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

### OIFA Member Newsletter - October 2021

#### COVID-19 Update

The health and safety of members and vendors continues to be DDD's top priority. Positive COVID-19 cases in Arizona remain high. All counties currently are considered to have high or substantial COVID-19 transmission rates. Any Arizonan 12 years or older is eligible to receive the vaccine in Arizona. COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective and available at no cost to you.

The vaccines are as widely available and as easily accessible as possible. Vaccines are available at pharmacies, doctor's offices and other locations run by county health departments. You can find a vaccine site near you online at <https://www.azdhs.gov/findvaccine> or by calling 1-844-542-8201. You can text your zip code to 438829, for English, or 822862, for Spanish. You will receive a text message with three locations near you with vaccine availability.

Eligible Medicaid members can get non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) to their vaccine appointment. Contact your [health insurance provider](#) for more details. You can also find facts and myths about the COVID-19 vaccine on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) website. All guidance and details about flexibilities allowed during the COVID-19 public health emergency are available on the [DDD Actions Related to COVID-19 web page](#).

#### Get A Flu Shot

It is the beginning of flu season in Arizona. Flu is a contagious respiratory illness. It is caused by influenza viruses that can infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Anyone can get the flu. Serious problems related to flu can happen at any age. Some people are at [high risk of serious flu-related complications](#) if they get it.

Flu symptoms are similar to COVID-19 symptoms. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting and diarrhea (this is more common in children than adults)



The best way to prevent the flu is to get the [flu vaccine](#). Flu vaccine (or flu shot) has been shown to reduce flu related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications. You can also do the following to

help slow the spread of germs:

- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Wash your hands often.

The flu and COVID-19 are not the same disease. The flu vaccine does not prevent severe illness from COVID-19. Talk to your doctor about getting the flu vaccine. Also talk to them about the COVID-19 vaccine if you have not yet gotten it.

You can also call your DDD Health Plan or the DDD Tribal Health Program for information about where to get a flu shot.

- Mercy Care: 1-800-624-3879
- UnitedHealthcare Community Plan: 1-800-348-4058
- DDD Tribal Health Program: 1-844-770-9500 ext. 7 (TTY/TDD 711)

## **Beware of DDD Imposter**

Recently in District East a member and their family were contacted at their home by a man who said his name was Allen David. Mr. David lied and said he worked for DDD. This person asked the member and his father questions including about the member's finances. Support Coordinators have been conducting all planning meetings virtually during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Meetings are only being held in person when members specifically request them. You do not have to answer any questions from anyone you do not know. Contact the local police if anyone suspicious contacts you and says they are from DDD.

## **Successfully Adjusting to Life with Autism**

Maxton and his remarkable family have trekked a long journey even at just six years old. Formerly a member of the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP), Maxton transitioned to the DES Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) at age 3. DDD advised Maxton's mom, Kaiya, that at age 3, he qualified for pre-kindergarten.

"We found one of the most amazing schools that had a S.P.I.C.E. program." said Kaiya. S.P.I.C.E. is an acronym for Social, Pragmatics, Independence, Communication, and Emotional Regulation. His teacher taught teens with Autism for 13 years but wanted to work with younger children. Once you start really young, children have a better chance to function normally, be social and have all those skills."

Maxton was diagnosed with Level 3 Autism right before he turned age 6. Level 3 Autism is the most severe and requires "very substantial support." Level 3 Autism may include severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills. It can also cause severe impairments in function, very limited initiation of social interactions, and minimal response to social overtures from others.

Maxton would not make eye contact when he was a baby and his parents would call his name. Mom notes, "He is always just doing his own thing. He's always been very independent. He loves to play by himself. He was such a good baby, very quiet. He progressed normally – he walked on time. Physically, there's nothing wrong with him."

"I started doing research myself. What is Autism? What can I do to improve his cognitive skills and his

thinking, because he was always kind of in a little cloud?" In her research, Kaiya discovered a book written by a neurosurgeon, Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride: Gut and Psychology Syndrome. Natural Treatment of Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Depression and Schizophrenia. Kaiya explains, "Basically what it's describing is our guts and our brains are very much connected. And with Autism, they say that a lot of kids have digestive problems, and they don't sleep well. They do not have the



proper bacteria to get nutrition in their body to speak to their brain. So, I changed his entire diet."

It took two years, but Maxton was slowly taken off all dairy, processed foods, and corn syrup sugar. "I started making bone broths," said Kaiya. "I would go to butchers' and ask them for their bones." Mom and Dad would make a giant stockpot of bone broth and would store them in jars in the freezer. Then they started making smoothies. Kaiya would use a juicer to juice beets, root vegetables, strawberries, and berries. "I'd put all this stuff together in a smoothie and he'd drink it."

Changing Maxton's diet "was really hard because you go to the grocery store and read some of the stuff on the back of the boxes. It's so hard to find snacks. I had to basically make everything myself. It was so worth it! He went from being in this cloud state to making eye contact!" The new diet has also helped with Maxton's sleeping. Maxton is now learning how to talk. Maxton knows all his colors, is very artistic and is "all boy" - playing outdoors, soccer, Hot Wheels, trains, dinosaurs. He loves to sing and will often sing along with the music on the Cocomelon Show.

Unlike many on the Autism spectrum, Maxton is very affectionate. "He's always been affectionate. He loves to be cuddled and he loves to give hugs. He's also a watchful big brother to his 1- and 2-year old sisters. He looks out for them, too. Any dangerous situation, he is very aware."

## **November is Arizona Family Caregivers Month**

Arizona celebrates Family Caregivers during the month of November. In 2020, Governor Ducey signed a Caregiver Proclamation launching the month-long celebration. That Proclamation stated that "in Arizona, over 800,000 family caregivers were providing informal care in all socioeconomic groups across the lifespan totaling over \$9 billion in unpaid care." The Proclamation identified, "the month of November is observed as a tribute to Arizona's family caregivers by recognizing the value of the care they provide and thanking family caregivers for continuing to care for vulnerable Arizonans" to acknowledge these caregivers.

According to the Administration for Community Living (ACL), families are the primary source of support for older adults and people with disabilities in the United States. According to the ACL many caregivers work and also provide care which can result in responsibility conflicts. Caregivers also experience significant emotional, physical, and financial toll. ACL research indicates that nearly half of all caregivers are over age 50, making them vulnerable to a decline in their own health.



This year, DDD joins the Division of Aging and Adult Administration (DAAS) in recognizing family caregivers for the valuable, meaningful and appreciated work they do. Family caregivers can join DDD and DAAS at a virtual Family Caregiver Conference being held on Monday, November 1, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Interested participants can register at <https://azdes.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlftu-vrjwvHJl6GaBFnPfl3kxMX4ycVJ0>.

## **Person Centered Service Plan**

Support Coordinators are using a new process called Person-Centered Service Planning. This new process supports our mission of empowering individuals with developmental disabilities to lead self-directed, healthy and meaningful lives. It will help your Support Coordinator better engage with you, your family, and your planning team.

Your Support Coordinator will use Person-Centered Service Planning during your planning meeting. They will use it to complete the assessment. It will help determine needed services and supports. It was created by AHCCCS and all Managed Care Organizations (MCO) supporting the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCs). The goal of the Person-Centered Service Planning process is to help the planning team work together to create and put to action a plan driven by the member.

Person-Centered Service Planning will help DDD ensure members' voices and choices are heard. Members will have greater independence and input on the services they receive. It will also improve timely and appropriate care coordination, so their needs are met. The ultimate goal is to help members achieve their goals and live the life they want. More details and answers to frequently asked questions are available on the DDD website.

## **Volunteers Needed**

DDD needs volunteers to support the district Independent Oversight Committees (IOC). IOCs provide oversight on topics related to the human rights of people with developmental disabilities. Each IOC has between 7 and 15 members. Some members are required to have specific experience. Parents of individuals that receive services from DDD are also on the committees. Visit <https://ioc.az.gov/committees/ddd> to learn more and apply.

DDD needs volunteers to support the Program Review Committees. Program Review Committees

review member Behavior Treatment Plans. They also make recommendations to address challenging behaviors. Committee membership is open to a wide range of individuals. PRC sessions are held twice a day. Volunteers are not required to attend all sessions. Visit the [DES Volunteer Center](#) for more information.

## Town Hall Meetings

DDD hosts town hall meetings for members, families and providers on the first Thursday of every month. The town hall starts at 6:00 p.m. You can join via the Internet or by telephone. Attendees can also ask questions. The next town hall will be held on Thursday, November 4, 2021.

Visit <http://bit.ly/dddtownhall> for details to join.

## Community Resources

DDD has information for local, state, and national groups that support members and their families. The DDD website has links to many of these groups that can assist with day to day tasks and other services that may not be covered by the Division. [Visit the community resources section of the DDD website to learn more.](#)

## Crisis Services

If you, a family member, or a friend have a mental health emergency, it is important that you seek help right away. Trained crisis staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help over the phone. The Crisis lines are free, confidential, and open to anyone who needs help. For medical, police and fire emergency situations, always call 911.

### Suicide and Crisis Hotlines by County

- Maricopa County served by Mercy Care: 1-800-631-1314 or 602-222-9444
- Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz and Yuma Counties served by Arizona Complete Health - Complete Care Plan: 1-866-495-6735
- Apache, Coconino, Gila, Mohave, Navajo and Yavapai Counties served by Health Choice Arizona: 1-877-756-4090
- Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: 1-800-259-3449
- Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: 1-855-331-6432

### Especially for Teens

- Teen Life Line phone or text: 602-248-TEEN (8336)

### National 24-Hour Crisis Hotlines

#### Phone

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- National Substance Use and Disorder Issues Referral and Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

#### Text

- Text the word "HOME" to 741741

## Report Fraud, Waste or Abuse

Medicaid fraud, waste and abuse (FWA) are crimes. Report fraud, waste, and abuse right away. You will not get in trouble or lose services if you report any suspected fraud, waste, or abuse.

### You can report FWA to DDD by:

- Calling DDD at 1-877-822-5799
- Sending an email to [dddfwa@azdes.gov](mailto:dddfwa@azdes.gov)
- Sending a letter to DES/DDD, Attn: Corporate Compliance Unit, 1789 W Jefferson St., Mail Drop 2HA1, Phoenix, AZ 85007
- Completing this [online form](#).

### You can also report FWA to AHCCCS

- Call the Office of the Inspector General at 602-417-4193
- Report Online at the [AHCCCS Website](#)
- Report provider fraud by calling:
  - Maricopa County: 602-417-4045
  - Outside Maricopa County: 1-888-487-6686
- Report member fraud by calling:
  - Maricopa County: 602-417-4193
  - Outside Maricopa County: 1-888-487-6686
- Submit general questions via email at [AHCCCSFraud@azahcccs.gov](mailto:AHCCCSFraud@azahcccs.gov).

## Stay Up to Date

All old OIFA newsletters are available to view on DDD's website. Visit the [Member Services](#) page and click on the "Member Newsletters" section.

## DDD is Here to Help

Please contact your Support Coordinator or the DDD Customer Service Center at 1-844-770-9500 ext. 1 (TTY/TDD 711) if you have questions.

Call the DDD Customer Service Center at 1-844-770-9500 ext. 1, TTY/TDD 711, to ask for this material in other formats. Language help is available at no cost to you.