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## **Attention Home- and Community-Based (HCBS) Providers, Including Case Managers and Care Coordinators**

Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Department has determined it is best to place our HCBS validation strategies on a sixty-day pause from April 13, 2020 to June 12, 2020. This decision has been made to ensure the health and safety of the members we serve, the provider base, validators, and to ensure the integrity of the HCBS validation process.

Validation strategies to be paused include the Individual Experience Assessment (IEA) conducted by Case Managers/Care Coordinators, on-site validation by Disability Rights Maine (DRM) and OADS staff, and desk reviews conducted by OADS. Please note however that for any validations that are currently in process (scheduled and started, meaning the provider has been contacted by a DRM validator and some or all documents have been provided to DRM), these validations will not be paused but instead will be completed. More information about Maine's HCBS validation strategies can be viewed at:

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads/hcbs/training-and-resources.shtml>

**Additionally, although Disability Rights Maine (DRM) is not conducting “on-site” validations due to COVID-19, they are able to conduct a virtual/remote version of the on-site validation process during this time. Any provider with a setting(s) that has been selected for validation by DRM may voluntarily choose to contact DRM to schedule the virtual validation of the setting(s) during this time.** Providers who can participate in settings(s) validation with DRM during the next sixty days *are encouraged to proceed* with these validations. By doing so, the provider will receive the findings report for the setting(s) sooner and, as a result, will have more time for setting remediation. To schedule with DRM, please contact Katrina Ringrose by email at [kringrose@drme.org](mailto:kringrose@drme.org) or call her at (207) 626-2774, ext. 234.

CMS has not announced an extension to the March 2022 deadline for states to fully comply with the HCBS Settings Rule. Therefore, Maine's HCBS Settings rule compliance efforts remain on an extremely compressed timeframe. The Department will be monitoring the COVID-19 guidance closely to determine whether the sixty-day pause can end early or whether an extension may be required. The Department will keep all validation partners informed as new decisions are made.

When it is safe to resume on-site validations and face-to-face Individual Experience Assessments, we must all fully engage with these efforts. The timeframe for completion of IEA's is extended to October 31, 2020. This sixty-day pause may also result in on-site validations by DRM continuing until December 31, 2020.

The Department remains committed to assisting providers in achieving HCBS compliance. During this sixty-day pause, we will provide further guidance and samples of HCBS-compliant policies, lease agreements, etc. As always, we welcome your comments, questions, feedback via [HCBS.DHHS@maine.gov](mailto:HCBS.DHHS@maine.gov).