



Reporting During COVID-19

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) remains dedicated to health and welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has had a significant effect on Major Unusual Incident (MUI) reporting and trends. Based on the data collected, it is apparent that efforts to reduce the spread of the virus have been effective.

It is critical to continue reporting incidents outlined in [OAC 5123:17-02](#) at all times to protect vulnerable populations.

Over the last quarter, DODD has seen reductions in MUI reports, including Abuse, Neglect, Peer-to Peer Acts, Unapproved Behavioral Supports, and Hospitalizations. Advocates fear that abuse and neglect still occur but may be underreported. People are not attending school, work, or other activities where incidents are typically identified and reported. As a result, they are spending more time with their primary caregivers who may not be mandated to report incidents and less time with additional people who may identify and report concerns.

While there was not a noticeable upward trend of suicide attempts and psychiatric hospitalizations from March to May 31, 2020, the effect on Ohioans with developmental disabilities has been very real. Isolation and other stress-related factors have impacted the mental health of many people. For some, this has led to increases in Unapproved Behavioral Supports, reports of Missing Persons, and psychiatric hospitalizations. It is critical that mental health needs are considered at all times.



MUI Data Trends

March 1 - May 31, 2020

- There have been 305 Unanticipated Hospitalizations in which the person was tested for COVID-19 and 20 deaths
- While alleged Neglect incidents have been consistently declining, there was a 46% decrease in allegations during May compared to last year.
- There was a 23% decrease in Physical Abuse allegations in May, compared to May 2019.
- There was a 31% decrease in Unapproved Behavioral Support allegations in May compared to last year.
- Significant Injuries were down 38% from May 2019-2020.
- There was a 14% decrease in total Unanticipated Hospitalizations from May compared to last year.
- There was also a decrease in pneumonia and influenza hospitalizations.
- The COVID-19 infection curve as reported to DODD is flattening.

Possible Causes and Contributing Factors for Reduction in MUIs

- There are fewer times of transition which are common times for incidents to occur.
- There are fewer power struggles (Unapproved Behavioral Support, Rights Code Violations, or Verbal Abuse) because people do not have to maintain a schedule, go to appointments, or engage in other activities that may be stressful.
- Due to the increased need for staffing and direct support professional (DSP) shortages, a provider agency may be concerned that reporting an allegation may result in the need to place a DSP on leave, resulting in further staff shortages.
- Medical and other professional appointments have been canceled or postponed resulting in other mandated reporters having fewer interactions with vulnerable people. As such, these professionals are not able to identify potential Abuse and/or Neglect.
- Residential staff and county boards of developmental disabilities are finding creative uses for technology to engage people in activities through online video chatting and exercise.
- DSPs are focused on implementing precautions and keeping people healthy and safe. While they are addressing issues as they arise, they may not be reporting these issues.
- At-risk children are not attending in school. Often school personnel report concerns about a child's health and welfare.
- Incidents occurring during transport are almost non-existent since the stay-at-home order was put in place.
- DSPs are handling peer-to-peer incidents, but are not reporting.
- People may be spending more time sleeping and in their bedrooms.
- People are interacting with fewer peers, so there may be fewer opportunities for incidents and allegations.

What Can You Do to Make Sure People are Safe?

- Ensure you are taking immediate action to protect people when there is an incident.
- Encourage people to talk about their concerns.
- Ensure each DSP knows who to report to within your agency and how to report.
- County board employees can review reporting procedures within their counties.
- Make sure people receiving services understand who to contact and how to contact them if they have a problem.
- Test your on-call system.
- Check-in with DSPs to make sure they do not have any questions about reporting.
- Review how to complete an incident report at your next staff meeting.



[Watch Cassandra Benning-Lewis](#) discuss the importance of reporting MUIs

DODD Abuse and Neglect Hotline

1-866-313-6733

<https://ocf.prodapps.dodd.ohio.gov/>

Crisis Text Line: Text "4HOPE" to 741741
OhioMHAS Help Line: 1-877-275-6364