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Serving Children and Adults with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities for over 70 Years

July 17, 2020

PAUL H. TORRES
Executive Director

Dear AHRC Suffolk Individuals, Families and Staff:

It has been four months since COVID-19 shut down our site-based programs. While our area has come so far in those months, this week Suffolk County has seen a spike in infection that is higher than we've had in the last six weeks and only second to NYC in all of the State of New York - we cannot afford to go backwards, and we must remain proactive and consistent. During this time, we have worked to offer children and adults remote and individualized services as often and as best as possible within their capacity to receive and benefit from services in such a manner. All the while we have been working on the logistics, safety and cleanliness practices and procedures in pace with New York Forward to reopen our programs.

OFFICERS

John Smith
President

Joseph Zifchock
Treasurer

Joseph Cassarini
Secretary

We have gradually and incrementally relaxed restrictions in our residences as Suffolk has progressed through the Forward phases. Families continue to visit their loved ones and the residential team is exploring how to implement safe visits indoors. Outdoor outings have continued - thank goodness for the beautiful weather! With new guidance coming, residents will be able to get back to some of the enjoyable outings they have missed, including long-overdue haircuts and manicures! As we continue to look at how to safely expand our opportunities in the community, individuals and staff remain vigilant in proper handwashing, sanitizing and the proper use of PPE. Adhering and committing to these safety procedures is why we can say that we currently have no new positive COVID-19 cases in any of our residences.

DIRECTORS

Deborah Pflieger

Our Saul and Elaine Seiff Educare Center is ready to welcome students in-person on Monday. Staff has been busy strategizing, planning and rearranging to best engage students while protecting all. In order to minimize co-mingling of groups, they have set up a cohort model, drawing from limited staff groups to help in classes. For example, classrooms that face each other are now cohorts and have the ability to share staff when necessary. For each classroom, there is a specific Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist and Speech Therapist and they are responsible for their own caseloads and make-up sessions. Additionally, decals have been placed to indicate direction in our hallways and to promote social distancing. All treatment areas are being spread out to allow for distancing, including dividing the school multipurpose room in half, to give our Physical Therapists an extra place to work. You will even notice social distancing dots outside our buildings to guide spacing while all students and staff are screened before entering.

The Adult Day Services team, along with a group of family members, has been actively planning the reopening of our day services programs in phases. In the last few days we received guidance from OPWDD, and beginning on July 22nd groups of individuals will begin returning to day programs. Plans are set for staggered arrival times, temperature and health screenings for all staff and individuals upon arrival and creative uses of spaces to allow individuals and staff to safely spread out. Visual cues and markers will be utilized throughout the buildings to help guide and reinforce safe distancing. Just like at our Educare Center, small consistent groupings of individuals and staff have been considered in an effort to limit exposure as much as possible. Consistent PPE use will be the norm, and reinforcement of proper hygiene practices will continue. For those who will not be attending programs in-person yet, our creative in-home and distance services will continue to be provided.

Our buildings have been far too quiet these last few months. We are eager to safely welcome back those we have been missing for so long, those who bring that special *buzz* into these buildings. We have all been doing our parts in learning how to keep ourselves and each other safe and protected, and we continue to evolve and stay attuned to the latest guidance so we can best support those who rely on us. I'm so proud of all of you for all you have done and continue to do. It has been no small feat what the AHRC Suffolk family has accomplished together thus far and our next steps in our journey will be all the more challenging. Aristotle said *the whole is greater than the sum of the parts*. #InItTogether

Stay well, stay safe and thank you for all you do.

Paul H. Torres
Executive Director

☯ RIP JDB



Your gift to our **COVID-19 Relief Fund** helps us purchase personal protective equipment, provide expanded medical and mental health services, increase our technology, and so much more. To donate, visit www.ahrCsuffolk.org/covidrelief (donations, marked **COVID-19 Relief Fund**, can also be mailed to the address at the top of this page)