



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

May 22, 2020

PAUL TORRES
Executive Director

Dear AHRC Suffolk Individuals, Families and Staff:

Memorial Day weekend is upon us and we pause to honor all those in our armed services who have dedicated themselves and given their lives to protect us all. This leads us to recognize those who serve others in different ways—our staff and our families. While the type of service is certainly different, people who choose to serve others in such a variety of ways should receive our respect and recognition every day.

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We are pleased to report that we are in our second week of no new positive cases for individuals or staff. This is an encouraging direction and we remain thankful to our staff and individuals for maintaining good hygiene practices and social distancing to protect themselves and those around them. However, we must remain vigilant. We must continue to wash hands frequently and properly, continue cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces and we must remain hypervigilant in reminding all to not touch faces, mouths and eyes. We are limiting the sharing of group-use items (such as remotes, serving ware, tablets and more) and disinfecting them between users, taking temperatures at the beginning of every shift and every eight hours and staff are staying home if they're feeling sick, have a temperature or have flu-like symptoms. The proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) continues to be vital for maintaining healthy homes, with extra focus on cross contamination risks when engaging one resident and then another, as well as the risk of contamination to self when donning and doffing.

As I mentioned in last week's update, OPWDD inspections of our houses will begin soon. The evaluation tool they will be using in the inspections will be shared with houses in advance, to help staff understand the purpose of their visit and what they will specifically be looking for.

There are many questions and concerns about when day program sites will be permitted to reopen, and in what capacities when they do reopen. The Center for Disease Control over the weekend released [guidelines for gradual reopening of programs](#), which we are reviewing carefully as part of our thoughtful and thorough planning. Site-specific guidelines begin on page 40 of the document. We are closely monitoring [New York State's Regional COVID-19 metrics](#) for where Long Island currently stands for reopening and there has been recent regression in our advancement, so we must be patient as this develops to minimize the risk of spread to our residences and yours, and our loved ones. Additionally, yesterday Governor Cuomo announced that schools cannot open for in-person instruction this summer. It saddens us that we will not be reunited sooner, but we value the added time to prepare ourselves safely for your return.

This recent stretch of beautiful spring weather should remind us to open windows as much as possible, to let fresh air circulate throughout our homes. The nice weather should call people outside, to enjoy the perfect temperature, some much-needed sunshine and some outdoor activities while maintaining social distancing and staying safe. Being outside on a beautiful day not only benefits our bodies, it also changes up the scenery and can reinvigorate the soul.

As we continue to face so many changes and uncertainties in our daily lives, knowing that we are in this together hopefully brings you some comfort and peace. Remembering that we have an incredible team, continuing to work together to push for the brighter days and important milestones, makes it all seem a little more manageable. As always, you all have my thanks and gratitude for all that you continue to do to benefit each other and those we support. Please have a safe and enjoyable weekend. #Inittogether

Stay Well,

Paul H. Torres
Executive Director



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)