



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

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April 17, 2020

**PAUL TORRES**  
Executive Director

Dear AHRC Suffolk Individuals, Family Members and Staff:

It is hard to believe that a month has passed since our last “normal” day, when day programs were last operating in our AHRC Suffolk buildings on March 16. The changes and challenges that have occurred in our communities and here within our agency are indescribable, and I know most of us find it hard to truly grasp the struggles many are facing. However, during this period of time, we have seen remarkable perseverance, dedication, commitment and strength from everyone associated with this agency, including the individuals we support, our staff and our family members and that gives us the encouragement to keep pushing through.

We remain steadfast and vigilant about keeping safety our utmost concern. We continue to adhere to rigorous cleaning and disinfecting protocols, social-distancing guidelines and the proper use of personal protective equipment. We are hopeful about what appears to be a slight flattening of the curve, however, now is not the time to lower our guard or have a false sense of security that might distract us from keeping our individuals and our staff protected and supported.

As has been the norm for many weeks, all staff in all residences continue wearing protective masks, eyewear and gloves during their shifts and all individuals in all homes are expected to wear face masks and gloves at all times when tolerated. Even within homes we are social distancing and observing quarantine-like procedures where individuals are showing flu-like signs or symptoms and we are routinely taking temperatures and pulse oximeter readings. Staff continue to self-monitor signs and symptoms and are routinely taking temperatures daily.

During this time we have suffered the terrible loss of three individuals from our residences and two we serve in the community. Words cannot describe the hurt that staff has felt for loved ones they have spent so much time with and treated as family members for years. And our pain cannot compare to those families who lost loved ones. The bitter cruelty of this pandemic is that it has not given us the rightful pause to mourn together and to celebrate the lives of those we miss. For staff, the work and daily needs of others has not paused, while social distancing keeps us at bay from sharing the losses together in an immediate and meaningful way. We will not forget the need to acknowledge these losses and celebrate these souls together once it is safe for us to do so.

The adversity of the past month has also brought us great triumphs to celebrate. Seven of our individuals who tested positive have recovered, while twelve of our staff have returned to work. I look forward to a day, hopefully not too long from now, where we can get back to some semblance of “normal”, welcoming individuals back to programs in whatever new form they take, and witnessing reunions of those who have gone without seeing their loved ones, friends and staff members. Please remember, we are a family and we are *#InItTogether*.

Stay Strong and Stay Well,

Paul H. Torres  
Executive Director