



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

May 15, 2020

PAUL TORRES
 Executive Director

Dear AHRC Suffolk Individuals, Families and Staff:

As we come to the end of another busy week, I'd like to take a moment to express my gratitude and appreciation to all of our staff, especially those on the front lines, and to all of our individuals for their strength and tenacity during these challenging times. I am also incredibly thankful to everyone who has continued to support us through this uncharted territory. We appreciate it always!

OFFICERS

John Smith
 President

Joseph Zifchock
 Treasurer

Joseph Cassarini
 Secretary

In previous messages, I have mentioned our continued efforts to acquire the resources necessary to maintain a strong response to the coronavirus. I am pleased to say that all staff members working in any of our programs have access to PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). If, for any reason, you have concerns about PPE availability, please let your department head know immediately. Now more than ever, it is important to remain vigilant and stick stringently to our routines of washing hands, cleaning routinely and using PPE consistently. With New York state beginning the slow process of reopening, it is critical to stick to routines to keep the coronavirus on a steady decline.

DIRECTORS

Deborah Pflieger

With that said, it saddens me to report that we have lost another individual from one of our residences. He will sorely be missed and once this pause is lifted we would like to celebrate his life as a family. While we mourn this loss and the loss of all of our loved ones due to this awful pandemic, we must take comfort in the fact that we are beginning to see improvement in the amount of cases of the coronavirus and are hopeful that we will keep moving in a positive direction. I am happy to report that this last week has been the first week AHRC Suffolk has seen no new positives for the virus in both individuals and staff. This is a wonderful step in the right direction that I know we all want to see continue for the foreseeable future.

In agency news, OPWDD (Office for People With Developmental Disabilities) will be initiating surveys of our residences in relation to COVID-19 in the next week or two. The surveys will be non-disciplinary in action and will focus on front line staff utilizing appropriate protocols for infection prevention and control, health status monitoring, and accessing/utilizing appropriate supplies/materials. The residences will receive approximately three days' notice before the visits so they can prepare. The surveys will end with surveyors sharing observations and recommendations. There is still talk that these surveys maybe virtual tours, but that seems unlikely. We will use all screening protocols for OPWDD auditors.

I also want to take a moment to urge families, friends and loved ones to reach out to their federal representatives in a **Call to Action** regarding funding for the needs of those with disabilities along with their families and caretakers. While Congress has appropriated trillions of dollars to address the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, they have not adequately addressed the needs of people with disabilities, their families, caretakers, and direct support professionals. The next round of COVID related funding is being discussed in Congress, with the House recently releasing the **Heroes Act**. Many of the items we have lobbied for are in this Act and it is critical that we reach out to our representatives to make sure it remains in the bill and the funding we need is received. Please **see the Call To Action document below this letter** which includes all of the information and links that you need to make the essential step to help us ensure that we get the funding needed.

In other good news, we are excited to welcome a new member to our Board of Directors, Deborah Pflieger. Ms. Pflieger is an attorney by training, and a tax partner and practice leader at Ernst & Young. AHRC Suffolk has been an important part of Ms. Pflieger's life for more than fifty years. Having two siblings who have attended AHRC Suffolk (her sister is still in our program), Deborah has seen firsthand the agency's mission to support and provide services to the intellectually and developmentally disabled. She was a member of the Sibling Group and an officer of a junior auxiliary in the 1970's. She worked for a summer at the school and was very active in the bingo drawings that we held in Farmingdale for several years. With her extensive background, Ms. Pflieger will bring legal, finance and leadership skills to AHRC Suffolk's Board of Directors and we are so happy to have her with us. Please join me in welcoming her to the AHRC Suffolk Board and to a new and promising chapter in the life of AHRC Suffolk!

As we continue on our journey through this challenging time, I thank you for your support and commitment to AHRC Suffolk and our mission. I am eager to keep moving forward and continuing on this positive path. Thank you, as always, for staying the course! #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)





COVID-19 Federal Advocacy Update

May 15, 2020

CALL TO ACTION: Heroes Act

Talking Points and Message to Federal Representatives on COVID-19 Package 4

While Congress has appropriated trillions of dollars through the passage of several bills to address the economic devastation caused the COVID-19 pandemic, they have not adequately addressed the needs of people with disabilities, their families, caretakers, and direct support professionals. In particular, New York State has suffered greatly, with 25% of all COVID-19 cases nationwide and a disproportionately low federal aid response.

The next round of COVID-19 related funding is currently being discussed in Congress, with the House recently releasing the [Heroes Act](#). Many of the items we have sought and lobbied for are included in this legislation and we need to make sure it stays that way in the final bill! Our federal representatives need to hear from us loud and clear, so there can be no question of our critical needs. It is critically important that families lead the charge, because your voices will resonate the loudest of all.

What to Do

Call your federal representative using the [talking points](#), or download this [letter template](#) to personalize with your own information and story. Once you complete your letter, either send a hard copy to your representative through the mail, or send it via the contact form on their website by copying and pasting in the body of the online form. Contact information can be found below.



Find your House Representative

Click [here](#) and enter your zip code or address to find your congressional representative. If there is more than one House representative for your zip code, take the opportunity to send to both.

Contact our U.S. Senators

Senator Charles Schumer (D - NY)
322 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510
(202) 224-6542
Contact: www.schumer.senate.gov/contact/email-chuck

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D - NY)
478 Russell Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510
(202) 224-4451
Contact: www.gillibrand.senate.gov/contact/email-me

Share Your Efforts

After you reach out to your representative, please take a moment to complete this [brief survey](#), so we can track our collective efforts across the state.

Spread the Word!

Please share this message widely as we work to mobilize family and community advocates to support individuals with developmental disabilities and the providers who support them throughout this crisis.