

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE – April 30, 2020

Good afternoon,

As we approach the end of April we also approach the last few days of Round 2 of our Shelter In Place protocol at many of our homes. I believe the outcomes speak for themselves, as individuals we support and their staff continue to remain healthy and safe while staying at home. Staff in our residences, together with supporting staff that are helping with shopping and deliveries, as well as those behind the scenes who are busy with planning, coordinating and meeting financial needs... everyone is working together to help bring about a safe end to this unprecedented crisis. It bears repeating, how grateful we are as an agency for each person that has contributed toward the continuing health and wellbeing of the individuals we support. Thank you!!

We are planning for one more round of the 14-day Shelter In Place protocol which would take us to Monday, May 18, 2020. After six full weeks, and barring any unexpected turn of events, we will begin relaxing some of our COVID-19 practices and procedures beginning on that date. A detailed plan that offers guidance and outlines expectations for when the Shelter In Place protocol is concluded will be coming out to you in the next few days. The plan will focus on safe practices related to social distancing, wearing masks, testing, hygiene, housekeeping, communication and transportation.

Once our Shelter In Place protocol is concluded, all furloughed staff will be required to return to work. A refusal to return to work on the part of any employee will, of necessity, be considered a voluntary resignation.

In other developments, Gov. Murphy's administration announced yesterday that funding is being made available for a temporary \$3.00/hour wage increase for Direct Support Professionals beginning on May 1, 2020. The Arc of Hunterdon was weeks ahead of our Governor and had already increased hourly wages by \$2.00/hour for people presently working residentially. I am pleased to announce that the additional \$1.00/hour (bringing the total to \$3.00/hour as approved by Gov. Murphy) will be paid to staff presently working residentially sooner than required and retroactive to April 20, 2020, which was the start of our current pay period. The added wage will continue through August 9, 2020, unless Gov. Murphy makes a change to the funding prior to that date.

Statewide trends, in terms of the number of new positive cases and hospitalizations, are moving in the right direction. We will get through this crisis... together. So far, it's taken a team effort and an incredible amount of determination and dedication on the part of so many to help make it through. Thank you so much for all that you are doing!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Mattison

Executive Director