

May 18, 2020

Dear Charles River Community,

I want to thank you for your outpouring of support to our staff and persons served during this healthcare crisis. Many have shown support by sending videos of appreciation, sending delicious food to the group homes, planting flowers outside the homes, and donating to our COVID-19 Relief Fund. This is greatly appreciated!

The last month has been an especially difficult time for the Charles River Center with a rise in COVID positive staff and persons served. Thankfully, this trend is decreasing. We currently have six quarantined residential programs; all are scheduled to come off within the next seven days. This is great news and is a direct result of our strict adherence to the CDC guidance.

As the Governor reveals his four-phase plan for re-opening the state, many questions come to mind. When can we allow visitors? When will our facility-based programs re-open? Where does our facility-based services fit into the Governor's phases of re-opening? When and how will transportation resume safely?

We continue to await clear guidance from the Commonwealth regarding all these questions. At this time, our facility-based programs will remain closed until further notice. Our remote outreach and services to our in-home and family supports will continue. Employees who can work from home will continue until further notice. We are awaiting guidance regarding modification to our visitor policy.

I assure you that the Department of Developmental Services and provider organizations are actively developing guidelines for re-opening in-person day programs. I am the Chair of the trade organization's taskforce engaged in this planning. This taskforce meets regularly with the state's Coordinating Council chaired by Deputy Commissioner Elizabeth Morse. It is abundantly clear that re-opening facility-based congregate settings must be slow and incremental, necessitating a redesign of our services that meets the highest standards for the health and safety of persons served and employees. This strategic plan will focus on flexible services while respecting person-centered individualized program plans to the greatest extent possible.

Plans are already underway at the Charles River Center to develop the plan for the re-opening of our day programs. This includes redesign of our facilities to allow for social distancing, as well as the implementation of infectious disease controls and cleaning protocols. We continue to add to our ample supply of personal protective equipment, and we are investigating screening and testing measures for all persons served and staff.

I assure you that as more information becomes available, I will communicate that to you and the Charles River Center's adaptation to it.

I appreciate your continued patience.

Be well and stay safe,

Anne-Marie Bajwa
President and CEO