

April 12, 2020

Dear CRC community,

During this time of seemingly constant change, I can tell you that some things have not changed at the Charles River Center. The tremendous outpouring of support and assistance given by our community has not changed; the dedication and compassion of our staff that we have come to rely on, has not changed; the drive to create caring, warm, engaging, and safe homes for our individuals has not changed; the manner in which staff from all departments collaborate and support each other has not changed; staff's compassion and creativity in problem solving for families in need, have not change. In fact, I have seen the core values and beliefs that are the cornerstone of Charles River, become even more prevalent in our everyday activities. This is what matters most to us and those we serve, when the world seems to be spinning on a different axis.

As we begin to settle into our new virtual practices, I realize how much I miss seeing our individuals and employees every day. I miss the conversations with staff about their families and what's happening in their lives. I miss walking through the programs and hearing the laughter and receiving high fives. I miss having day program participants drop by my office for an update on my family. Of course, this pales in comparison to what our individuals and their families have had to endure as the physical separation from each other has stretched into the fourth week. They have not been able to be together or go home for a family visit for weeks now. Thankfully families are beginning to connect with loved ones via technology.

It's genuinely an honor and a privilege to be a part of such a dedicated team and community that makes a difference in the lives of so many – and supports each other in the most challenging times.

Here are a few examples that I would like to share:

- Our staff are our warriors. They are working tirelessly every day for the people we serve. When they are called upon to assume new or different duties, they answer the call with pride. Day program staff continue to work along-side residential staff in our homes, to provide engaging activities and keep everyone safe.
- Our nursing team has gone above and beyond in providing care under the most challenging circumstances. They continually train staff on the changing CDC guidance and the proper uses of Personal Protective Equipment, while monitoring the medical care of all persons served.

- A virtual taskforce has been assembled, inclusive of all departments to develop and share virtual activities for our residential programs and homes of individuals whose day programs are suspended.
- Family Support staff are in regular contact with our families to aid with food, personal items, virtual activities and resources.
- The procurement of supplies has been a daunting task. Staff, with the help of community members have been working tirelessly to obtain the needed supplies.
- Families and community members continue to show their support with flowers, cards and notes of encouragement via our Thank a Staff Member campaign, as well as sewing homemade fabric masks to help mitigate the shortage of Personal Protection Equipment.

We're working diligently to support our staff and to provide them with the resources they need to keep everyone safe and healthy during this crisis. We are constantly reviewing and adjusting operations in order to keep everyone safe while maintaining some sense of routine and regularity. As new information becomes available, we inform our staff and realign our practices to the new guidance as quickly as possible.

We will continue to keep you updated and engaged as we manage through the pandemic. Let's continue to do our part by following the CDC guidelines, practicing social distancing and wash our hands. Please remember that the Charles River Center is here for you.

With best wishes for your health and safety,

Anne-Marie Bajwa
President and CEO