

July 21, 2020

Dear Charles River Center Community,

I hope everyone is enjoying this warm weather.

Charles River Center continues to work with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), MassHealth, Board of Health departments, health experts, and other stakeholders to review safety measures for our programs. As you know, our in-person services or facility-based programs remain closed, but we continue to provide virtual programming. For more information about our virtual events and groups, please visit our website at [Charles River Center events](#).

As the State moves into phase three, we are identifying all the ways reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic will affect our programs and developing a plan of action that includes the new health and safety requirements issued by EOHHS on July 2, 2020. [Phase 3 EOHHS Day Programming Guidance](#)

The health and safety of persons-served, their families, and Charles River Center employees remain our number one priority. In addition, we are working closely with person-served and their families to determine the risks and benefits of returning to in-person services, as well as additional programming to facilitate regular engagement within a virtual format.

Beginning on July 27, 2020, we are adhering strictly to the State's mandatory safety standards and guidance of no more than 50% office capacity at the Paul Merritt Center, Grugan Center and Natick site. We will continue to encourage staff to work from home as much as possible to keep everyone safe. The Paul Merritt Center, Grugan Center and Natick site remains CLOSED to the public, but staff members are available by phone or video conference during regular business hours.

To date, we do not have guidance from our funding sources regarding permissible programming beginning August 1st, therefore it is difficult to develop a comprehensive service delivery plan for re-opening of our day services. We are advocating for a hybrid service model that will include continued virtual programming, in-home supports, and face-to face programming both in the day programs and within our group homes. This hybrid approach, in my opinion allows for personal choice, an individualized risk/benefit assessment, and consideration for whichever method brings the greatest satisfaction to the person served. The difficulty remains that there will NOT be state-funded transportation provided for quite some time. This will have to be considered in our re-opening plan.

We know this has been a challenging time for all, and I want to thank you for your support and patience as we navigate these uncharted waters of reopening.

Be Well,

Anne-Marie Bajwa
President and CEO