Good Afternoon—this is your Friday update on what we are doing, and what is going on, in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Again, starting with good news, we still do not have any employees, or people we support, with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. Thank you all for your diligence in keeping yourself, and the people we support, healthy. And as always, please continue to be diligent in reporting any possible exposures to people who have tested positive or who have symptoms. Please be particularly aware of this if you have traveled, or are planning to travel to, New York City, Long Island, Westchester County, or Rockland County in the last two weeks. The metropolitan area is the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak for the entire country, so if possible please avoid travelling to that area while this emergency is ongoing. If you must be in that area, please be extra cautious, monitor yourself more carefully for symptoms, and report to us immediately if you have any concerns either about your symptoms or about possible exposure.

Personal Protective Equipment: We took delivery today of 2000 surgical masks, which we are in the process of distributing to our houses. We have also received numerous donated masks (in most cases homemade) that we will also distribute to our houses. We are also sending guidelines for the best use of these masks. In general, we are not requiring that these be worn; however, they are available for staff or residents to use if they will make people feel more comfortable. We are also hoping to receive more N95 respirator masks. These masks, when properly fitted, provide better protection than the surgical masks. However, there are guidelines about proper fitting and use that need to be followed for these to be effective, and for now we’re reserving these masks to make sure we have them if we have a medical situation where they are required.

Day services update: our day programs will be closed at least through April 10. We just learned today that the Governor has directed that public schools be closed at least through April 15, so it is likely that the direction from OPWDD to keep day programs closed will be in effect for at least that long. We will be assessing program status and our options weekly, and we will let everyone know when we plan to start day program operations again.
Food truck event: we have reluctantly concluded that we must cancel the “Trucks, Taps, Corks and Forks” food truck event that had been scheduled for May 16, at the harbor by Rivers Casino. This was shaping up to be our best event ever, with Skeeter Creek booked to play and more vendors than ever. At this point, though, it is highly unlikely that large gatherings like this will be permitted by May 16, and in the current environment it just doesn’t make sense to try and publicize the event and get people excited about it. This means that Jason LeBeau and I have another year before we have to defend our Corn Hole Championship. Many thanks to Michele Dombroski, Kelly Dombrowski and all the other members of the committee. We will bring this event back in 2021!

It goes without saying that these are very stressful times for all of us, both at work and at home. Please remember that all employees have access to our Success Coaches, who are a tremendous resource and who can assist with issues in just about any area of your life. Although they are not doing site visits, they are available to help. If COVID-19 or other issues have created difficulties for you or your family, call, text or email today:

Danielle Pouliott-Williams 518-709-8575, dwilliams@schenectadyworks.com
John McCarthy 5180344-8905, jmccarthy@schenectadyworks.com

Finally we are posting a general update for families and friends on our website. This update is less detailed than the recent emails to staff, but it gives a broad overview of what we’re doing as an agency. If you have questions from family members or others about the agency’s response, feel free to refer them to the website.

Thank you again for your flexibility, your creativity and your resourcefulness as we work through this event together. Stay healthy, and have a great weekend!