Schenectady ARC

MEMO

TO: All staff

FROM: Kirk Lewis, Executive Director

RE: Coronavirus update

DATE: March 31, 2020

Good morning, this is the first update this week on activities and issues around our response to the coronavirus. Again, starting with good news, we still do not have any people we support, or employees, with a confirmed case of COVID 19. Thank you for all your efforts to keep yourself healthy, and to help the people we support stay healthy.

The sad news is that the virus is taking a toll on people with I/DD living downstate. Our New York City chapter has had two deaths of people they support, and our Westchester chapter has had one. These deaths are a tragic reminder that this virus can be deadly to individuals who are vulnerable, and that organizations like ours serve many vulnerable people. As you know, the New York metropolitan area has become the epicenter for the virus for the nation, if not the world. I urge you to avoid, if at all possible, travel to New York City, Long Island, Westchester County or Rockland County—if you must travel to any of these areas, please be extra cautious and be extra careful in monitoring yourself for symptoms. Your vigilance can help us avoid one of these very sad situations.

At the national level, you may have heard that President Trump extended the national “shut down” through the month of April, to slow the spread of the virus. In all likelihood this means that all the shutdowns and social distancing measures that New York has instituted will continue through April as well. Although we have been looking at how we will operate in two week blocks, we are planning now and anticipating that we will have significant shutdowns at least through the month of April. Again, our staff have been tremendous in being flexible, and in helping to support our residential operations and our work at PRI. We will need continued flexibility and creativity as we support people for an extended period of time in these unusual circumstances.

Pine Ridge Industries continues to package and ship pipettes in record numbers. Thanks to a great effort by Mark Sheehan, we have received a grant that will help us get new work stations that are ergonomically superior and that will help our workers be more comfortable and more productive while they are doing this essential work. The great team at Pine Ridge has had additional help from our Transportation Department and from other workers from around the agency, and we thank everyone for pitching in to make this work.
With many of our employees working in different areas than their normal assignment, this is a reminder that if you have to call out for any reason, please call the supervisor at the site where you are assigned now, rather than your regular supervisor. So if you are a Maple Ridge employee temporarily assigned to a house, and you need to call out, call the house manager or supervisor where you were scheduled to work, not your supervisor at Maple Ridge. This will help communication stay simple and direct, and the houses will know who they have coming in. Thank you!

Speaking of “thank yous”, hopefully many of you saw the half page ad in the Gazette on Sunday (in the Business Section) that said “Thank you” to all of our employees. We not only want to say thank you, we want to make sure the larger community knows the great work that everyone has been doing. Again, on behalf of the people we support and our family members, I want to thank you for your great efforts. Wash your hands and stay healthy!