



March 2, 2020

Dear Families and Staff,

We have all been watching the Coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic unfold around the world and new information becomes available every day. We felt that it was important at this time to reach out to all of you and let you know that we are monitoring the situation very closely, along with our local Department of Health and the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). We receive ongoing guidance and information as to infection control protocols from these entities and will ensure swift implementation of any and all recommendations. Our emergency preparedness plans are currently being updated to include all guidance available to date and will continue to be updated as new information becomes available.

Since the virus is very new, health authorities continue to carefully watch how this virus spreads. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working hard to learn as much as possible about this new virus, so that we can better understand how it spreads and causes illness. The CDC considers this virus to be a serious public health concern and have made travel recommendations that can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/novel-coronavirus-china>.

We want to be very clear that we are acting in an abundance of caution and have absolutely no reason to suspect that staff or people who receive supports and services from AABR are at risk at the moment. Agency-wide training on general infection control precautions including the most important step in infection prevention, which is frequent handwashing, will be reinforced at all agency locations.

At this time, it is important to listen to facts and not respond to fear. Currently there is only one confirmed case in New York City, who is a patient under quarantine, and the risk to New Yorkers remains low. Therefore, there is no need to cancel regular activities or social events and there is no need for staff or people to wear surgical masks, unless otherwise directed by a healthcare professional.

Prevention

The NYS DOH recommends the following ways to minimize the spread of all respiratory viruses, including the Coronavirus:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. If you use a tissue, throw it in the trash.
- Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Follow recommended travel advisories from the CDC.

Symptoms

Information to date suggests that the Coronavirus causes mild-to-moderate illness and symptoms like the flu, including fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Please ensure prompt reporting of symptoms of people supported, as evaluation by their health care provider will be critical. Staff should also seek the advice of their health care provider should they have any symptoms.

The best outcomes always come from through preparation, especially when it concerns the health and safety of the people who we support and our workforce. We also believe in sharing pertinent information with all of you as it becomes available and will continue to do so as the need arises. We will continue to monitor the situation and will act at the direction of public health experts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Libby Traynor, LCSW". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Libby Traynor, LCSW
Executive Director

Additional Resources:

<https://health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>