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3/23/2020

To those we support and their families: As I write I am hoping that you are all feeling well and staying safe. I think the spread of Coronavirus and the needed precautions we are taking as a society have kept us all a lot anxious over the last couple weeks. I am writing to let you know what OCL is doing to continue essential services while contributing to the safety of those we support, families, OCL staff, and our community.

Future updates regarding OCL services will be posted on the OCL website. I am asking that you, if you can, to check it periodically to see if we have any new messages for you. You are also welcomed to call (315-434-9597 Ext. 203) or e-mail me directly at Danielk@oclinc.org if you have questions or concerns. Please understand that in the interest of time I am most likely to delegate a return communication to someone other than myself- a Director or Supervisor that is most able to answer the question or affect the situation you are contacting us about.

At present, OCL is open for business. You may have been hearing the Governor say that unessential businesses are required to telecommute and close offices to their staff. Important to know is that OCL is considered an essential business and DSPs services are considered essential services. This means we can continue to provide services throughout this crisis. We are also following emergency changes in regulation that will allow us to provide services to some persons differently where needed- telephone, facetime/Skype, shopping and other activities on behalf of persons, etc.

What should you do if you are concerned about having a staff person continue providing services?

We have had a few calls from families that elected to stop having staff work with their loved one for certain intervals. It is important to know that if you elect this choice it will not impact future services. Your loved one won't lose services for taking a break. We will resume them as quickly as possible when you decide to have them resume. We will do our best to find new hours for the effected DSPs and if we can't find other work then we will do our best to offer options to the person that will help them maintain some sort of income. This may be hard to do over time and though we expect work breaks to be short and that we are likely to retain staff through those breaks there is no guarantee that a staff member will feel comfortable waiting until work resumes—they have the right to consider other employment options.

One important misconception that I would like to correct is that Community Habilitation must take place in the community. We have had a few persons/families call to ask for a break in services because they thought it was required that they go out into the community with staff. Community Habilitation can take place in all settings, in home, in the community, during walks in parks, classes, etc. With emergency regulation changes we may even have more options to offer.

Please contact your DSPs supervisor/coordinator if have any concerns about staff continuing services or are worried about coverage should a staff member decide to stop working during this time. My hope is that you and the supervisor can work out an arrangement that is best for you and/or family at this time

whether that means stopping, reducing, or modifying services to best meet your needs. We would also like to keep some sort of contact with you and there are options for us to deliver some amount of connection and service through electronic means. The supervisor/coordinator that oversees your DSP(s) can talk to you about these options.

What is OCL doing to continue services in the safest possible way?

1. We are paying attention to CDC, State, and Local Health Director recommendations for discouraging the spread of this illness. This includes reminding staff to wash hands frequently, use hand sanitizer, keep prescribed 6 foot distance from other persons, to not come to work if they feel sick, to let us know if they have symptoms similar to COVID 19 (dry cough, fever, even a runny nose), and encouraging them to contact their doctor immediately if they have COVID like symptoms. We are also encouraging staff to follow the recommendations of their doctor or local health department triage line if they recommend Self-Quarantine.
2. We have closed the main office to other than essential staff and most of our essential staff are working as remotely as possible. Essential staff that do come in are required to use hand sanitizer as they enter and leave the office, to use good hygiene while they are at the office, and they are not allowed to come to the office if they are having even flu like symptoms. We are regularly sanitizing office surfaces with an appropriate and safe bleach to water mixture.
3. OCL keeps going though. We are so grateful for our decision to go electronic at the beginning of the year. This means that most of our agency staff have IPADS and our supervisors have Surface Pros which allow them to work remotely. We are adding an app called DUO to all IPADS and Surface Pros to allow face to face conversation over the web, notes and other communications can be done through electronic means as well. This means less human to human contact, less paper exchange, but most importantly it means we can keep up with one and one and group meetings as well as spend time with you electronically.

What if a staff member gets sick?

4. We will stay in constant contact with staff members who report having any symptoms of any illness, have COVID like symptoms, and/or get tested. They will not be at work if they are sick. We will notify persons who need to know this information for the purpose of avoiding getting ill or spreading the illness.
5. We are asking that you let us know if you have any encounters with persons who have tested positive for Coronavirus or are experiencing COVID like symptoms, and whether they have been tested or not.

Some basic requests of you?

1. Please be aware that with the office closed it may be harder to get a hold of some OCL supervisory, broker, administrative, and finance staff members. It may also take a little longer to get a response. Please be patient with us.
2. We would be very grateful if you were to provide these individuals with an email address that you check regularly. This will give them the option to do some communicating over e-mail, but it will also give the option to send you information for conference and web calls should it be advantageous to use those options

I hope that this was helpful. I will post other information on the website as things continue to change or update. In the meantime, I am wishing you all health and safety and hoping this situation resolves as quickly as it emerged upon us.

Sincerely,



Daniel Kelley, Executive Director