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Serving Children and Adults with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities for over 70 Years

June 26, 2020

PAUL H. TORRES Dear AHRC Suffolk Individuals, Families and Staff:
Executive Director

Just this week Long Island has entered Phase 3 of the New York Forward reopening in the recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic. This continual progress we are seeing in our area is inspiring, and it reinforces what our communities have been doing continues to work. New Yorkers hunkered down when we could, geared up in their PPE when we couldn't, practiced good hand-washing and social distancing and flattened the curve by working as a team towards collective progress. In fact, just yesterday Governor Cuomo announced that New York State has reached its lowest hospitalization rate since the beginning of the pandemic. It is truly remarkable how far we have come.

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While the statewide progress is cause for celebration, we have become more cautious regarding other states who are now experiencing spikes in positive COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths. We have endured so much these last three months and we need to continue doing all we can do to remain healthy, to remain safe and to remain vigilant. Do not let your guard down. This includes the creative outdoor visiting opportunities we support and continue to want to facilitate. Let's not take steps backward in our fight to keep everyone healthy.

I would also like to acknowledge the cautious reopening of our Saul & Elaine Seiff Educare Center for the summer. Plans include beginning our summer session on July 6 with distance learning/teletherapy sessions, as has been occurring the last several months. This will allow staff and families to prepare for the return of students to the building on July 20 for in-person services. Great care has been taken to adapt our classrooms to meet evolving safety and health protocols, and school administrators and teachers continue speaking with family members to assess their wishes for their student's education and services for the summer. We anticipate the school having a productive and memorable summer session.

In other important news, the Department of Health (DOH) recently announced drastic cuts to OPWDD residential services. These cuts will significantly reduce agency funding for any days an individual is not sleeping in their residence. Families and Residential Program staff will need to have collaborative conversations around the timing, frequency and length of overnight visits their loved ones will have outside of the IRA or ICF. **We need your voices to join our advocacy efforts!** You can use our [online advocacy platform](#) to send letters to Governor Cuomo and OPWDD opposing the cuts with just one click. A template letter, talking points, and advocacy tips are also available for download in [PDF](#) and [Word](#) formats. Please share these advocacy resources widely with your network and encourage families, staff, self-advocates and community members to send letters by July 1st.

On June 28, 1969, a raid on the Stonewall Inn sparked the fire that fueled the first wave of the Gay Pride Movement. A fight for equality and recognition not too dissimilar to the advocacy AHRC Suffolk stands for every day on behalf of the individuals and families we serve.

When all Americans are treated as equal, no matter who they are or whom they love, we are all more free.
- Former U.S. President, Barack Obama

Stay well, stay safe and thank you for all you do.

Paul H. Torres
Executive Director



Your gift to our **COVID-19 Relief Fund** helps us purchase personal protective equipment, provide expanded medical and mental health services, increase our technology, and so much more. To donate, visit www.ahrCsuffolk.org/covidrelief (donations, marked **COVID-19 Relief Fund**, can also be mailed to the address at the top of this page)