



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

April 10, 2020

PAUL TORRES
Executive Director

Dear AHRC Suffolk Individuals, Family Members and Staff:

I write to you today as part of my continuing effort to keep you updated on what we are doing to support those who benefit from our services and to support our valued staff.

BOARD MEMBERS

Joseph Cassarini
John Smith
Joseph Zifchock

Over the last week and a half, we've been working hard to get our story out to New Yorkers across the state, and to others around the nation. This is a very important effort, as our staff members are unheralded heroes who deserve not just thanks and attention, but all the resources they need for as long as they need them, to break the back of the coronavirus, get us to the other side, and begin to move, gradually and safely, to a more normal way of doing our work. We've had several recent successes in this area.

I am very pleased to let you know that on April 8 the New York Times published a front-page article outlining the incredible work being done by DSPs and others and the many challenges that Arc Chapters and other organizations have been facing during this crisis. The link to the NYT article is here: [*'It's Hit Our Front Door': Homes for the Disabled See a Surge of Covid-19.*](#)

This kind of high-level attention is critical to the advocacy that needs to be done to garnish recognition and resources to our field. Key AHRC NYC leadership staff will soon be on a call with OPWDD, the NYS Department of Health, and members of the Governor's Executive Chamber to discuss our response to the coronavirus and to reinforce our need for specific resources.

Over the past week, we have experienced a rapidly growing need for additional staff support in our residences. It has been a balancing act maintaining enough staff in a home and a consistency of the same staff to minimize contagion, while adjusting to staff who have fallen victim to getting sick. In a show of fortitude and determination, 6 staff members representing both residential and day services have recovered from being COVID-positive and returned to work. I cannot say enough about our front line heroes, and I ask in these extraordinary times, that everyone recognizes that we need their help. We have been successful on the passion and devotion of a dedicated few and we desperately need more help if we are going to have the stamina to be able to sustain this fight.

It is tragic that we have suffered two deaths of individuals in our residential program and one who attended our day program. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families and friends, and with our heroes, our staff, who too have suffered a loss because of how much we are like family to those we serve.

Due to the extraordinary commitment, diligence and professionalism of our front line staff, the majority of our locations are COVID-free. To say I've been inspired by their determination, creativity, teamwork, and resilience, would be an understatement. My recognition and gratitude go to those supporting the overall organization's administrative needs as well, for they are providing vital support and doing essential work to keep us all going.

As we celebrate Passover and Easter, we are reminded that human beings are extraordinarily resilient. We find ways to reconnect with, celebrate, and support one another. We also find solace in collectively pausing to grieve and remember those we have lost. In these days of social distancing, we are fortunate that we have access to technology that can bring us together.

I wish you and your loved ones peace, good health, and strength during these holidays. Thanks again for all you are doing!

Stay Strong and Stay Well!

Paul H. Torres
Executive Director