

COVID-19 Update

April 27, 2020

North Metro Community Services

Last week when I wrote this we had visions of reopening our facilities in early May and Day Program shortly thereafter; neither of those things is going to be happening nearly that soon. The Governor's new "Safer at Home" order really didn't change things for the people we serve; the order still asks that they stay at home as much as possible. The latest order combined with some other policies Health Care Policy and Financing has in place makes it clear that Day Program will not be resuming until at least late May. You are also probably aware that Tri-County Health has extended the stay at home order for Adams County for all residents until May 8. This raises the possibility that we will be bringing more staff to work in our facilities after that but that too is on a "wait and see" basis. Honestly I'm done making predictions about reopening dates; we'll just have to play this out week by week.

I am glad to report that there have been very few cases of COVID-19 within the staff of NMCS and the people we serve. That doesn't mean we have been totally spared but the impacts have generally been indirect. This is in no way meant to minimize the suffering of those who are dealing with this disease or its impact on their family or friends, it is just to state the fact that so far we've been fortunate.

There is one issue I want to clarify, especially for staff. We have made it quite clear that we don't want people reporting to work with symptoms that could be related to COVID-19. However we also don't want you reporting if you believe you may have been exposed to the disease. If you have a family member or friend that you have been in contact with who has either COVID-19 type symptoms or who has a confirmed case you must not report to work! I thought this went without saying but apparently that is not the case. If you've been exposed to someone with COVID or COVID type symptoms you need to contact your supervisor before you report to work or come into any of our facilities. As you should know you don't have to have symptoms to be contagious so you must err on the side of caution if you believe you've been exposed. Reporting to work when you believe you may have been exposed and thereby putting the health of others at risk will not be tolerated.

Last week I talked a little about how helpful the staff at Health Care Policy and Finance (HCPF) have been throughout this crisis. That help has continued with some additional funding that will let us help more of our Host Home Providers and Family Caregivers; those affected will be hearing more about this from our Residential Department in next week or so. However we are also getting some reality checks from HCPF. Last week Kim Bimestefer announced in a briefing that the State revenues are expected to fall by \$3.2 billion. That shortfall has to come out of the State general fund, which totals \$12.5 billion so it represents a cut of just over 25%. This means that Fiscal Year 20/21, which begins July 1 is going to be incredibly difficult at best. Though I believe there is a lot of support for the work we do it's unrealistic to think that we won't be significantly impacted by these revenue shortfalls. I don't want to be Mr. Gloom and Doom but I also don't want to leave you all in the dark about what is coming. We expect the Legislature to release its proposed budget by June 1 and will fill you in on the details when we have them.

I've backed off on the lectures about social distancing and masks the last couple of weeks but I just have to go back into that. Masks aren't required at this point (except at our facilities) they are just recommended but they are one of the only tools we have at our personal disposal to fight COVID-19 so we'd better be using them and using them correctly. Cover your face with a mask when you go out, including your nose. The mask provides you some protection but it protects the entire community from you if you should unknowingly have the disease. We also all need to remember social distancing and pay attention to how close we are getting to others. Now is no time to back off doing what we can to protect ourselves and our community.

Stay safe and healthy.

Randy Brodersen
Executive Director