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William R. Guarinello
President and CEO

October 27, 2020

Dear Residential Family Members, Caregivers and Advocates,

Over this past weekend we received new guidance from OPWDD regarding required actions in relation to New York State's COVID micro-cluster or "hot spot" strategy. Specifically, we are now required to observe the following in OPWDD certified facilities, which includes, ICFs, Supervised IRAs, Supportive IRAs, and Day Habilitation Programs.

1. **Hot Spot Notification:** OPWDD will notify us when any of our certified programs are in a red, orange or yellow zone—or when there are any changes to a previous notification. Currently, we have 4 residences in red zones, 28 residences and supportive apartments in yellow zones and 4 day programs in yellow zones.
2. **Weekly COVID Testing in Hot Spots:** Provider agencies such as HeartShare must demonstrate our efforts to have all staff and individuals living, attending program or working in one of the hot spot zones to be tested for COVID on a weekly basis until the location is no longer in a red, orange or yellow zone. Testing is strongly recommended, and HeartShare must demonstrate its efforts to inform everyone and attempt to ensure that everyone gets tested. Therefore, we will be requiring our staff working in hot spots to have a weekly test, and we will be taking residents for weekly testing if their residential program is located in a hot zone. We are exploring various testing alternatives that may be available to us. All positive results must be reported to both the NYC Department of Health and OPWDD.
3. **Suspension of Family Visitation in the Residences in Red Zones and Those Residential Programs with a COVID Positive:** OPWDD's guidance will now supersede HeartShare's prior decision to temporarily halt family visitation for all residences in hot zones. *Instead, family visitation is only ceased in red zones, as well as in any residential program where someone has tested COVID positive within the last 14 days (until the quarantine period has ended).* There is no cessation in home visits, and community activities can occur if undertaken with caution (we are directing our programs to do community activities in non-hot zone areas).
4. **Site-Based Day Services Suspension in Red and Orange Zones:** OPWDD is requiring agencies to suspend their site-based day and prevocational programs temporarily if in a red or orange zone. Community-based group and individual services (day hab without walls, community prevocational services, group supported employment, non-site-based respite, and community habilitation) are either suspended or operating at reduced capacity if in a red or orange zone. *These decisions may impact the ability of your family member to attend their day program, if they have gone back.*

These important changes affect many lives, and we appreciate your continued cooperation in working with us as we implement these new requirements and try our absolute best to keep your loved one safe and well. We will be communicating again as any new guidance emerges. Stay in touch with your residence coordinator or manager to learn whether the residential program your family member lives in is affected. Thank you and stay safe,



Linda

Linda Tempel
Executive Director, DD Services

Evelyn

Evelyn Alvarez
Associate Executive Director, DD Services

