

# Important Information on NHR's Response to SARS-CoV-2 (aka Corona Virus)

Friday, 3/20/2020

6:00 p.m.

I am writing to provide you with an update on NHR's response to SARS-CoV-2. Before I provide the update, I want to express my respect and gratitude to everyone working at NHR. The level of commitment, dedication, common purpose and sincere desire to be helpful to each other and the people we support is nothing short of inspiring. I know that we all (people we support, staff, families and other stakeholders) are anxious about what the future may hold with this pandemic. Working together to help keep people we support, ourselves and our families safe though this time is something we all can do to make a difference. We will all need to exercise patience and flexibility in the coming weeks and months as we adapt to changing circumstances. I will continue to provide updates to you at least weekly. Here is an update:

1. **DAY HAB STATUS** - OPWDD instructed providers to temporarily suspend the provision of day habilitation supports effective 5 p.m. on 3/17/2020. Last week, on 3/13/2020, NHR had suspended day supports for many people we support based on our internal risk assessment. With day hab supports now fully suspended, staff employed in our day hab programs (West Road, WOW and Napanoch) have been redeployed to residential sites throughout NHR effective 3/18/2020 to help ensure staffing levels are sufficient as people we support are now be home during the day. No DSPs have been laid off. To those DSPs in Day Hab who have been reassigned – thank you for your patience and flexibility as NHR worked to ensure that you could continue to work while our day program is suspended and continue to contribute to the wellbeing of people we support. While the details are yet to be made clear to providers, it is our understanding that NYS will provide a means for providers to be made whole financially for this statewide suspension of day hab programs.
2. **WEEKEND RESPITE** - As previously reported, NHR has canceled our weekend respite program for March and April and will reassess on a regular basis.
3. **SCHOOL CLOSURES** - So far school closures have not posed too great a burden on staffing levels. This is a remarkable achievement and a testament to team work and flexibility of many staff throughout NHR! Thank you!!
4. **ICF SAFEGUARDS** - Effective 3/14/2020, OPWDD issued guidance to providers on additional safeguards to be put in place at Intermediate Care Facilities (an "ICF"). NHR operates one ICF – Tyrrel Road – and on 3/14/2020, implemented these safeguards. These safeguards include: (a) with very limited exceptions. prohibition on visitors (several days prior, NHR had instituted a policy discouraging visitors, screening and tracking any visitors); (b) conducting body temperature checks of staff prior to beginning their shift (and sending staff home if their temperature is greater than or equal to 100.00 degrees Fahrenheit) and sending any staff home if they develop a fever during their shift; and, (c) requiring staff to wear a facemask when within 6 feet of a person/persons receiving supports. NOTE: NHR like all other providers is struggling to acquire needed supplies such as facemasks and hand

sanitizer. While Tyrrel Road has supplies currently, we are working to acquire additional supplies that could be used at Tyrrel Road and other NHR sites.

5. **IRA SAFEGUARDS** - Effective 3/18/2020, OPWDD issued guidance prohibiting visitors to our IRAs. See notice from OPWDD on our home page. Earlier, effective 3/13/2020, NHR had instituted a policy of discouraging in-person visits at most of our residential settings as well as home visits. NHR is working with people we support, staff and families to use technology (like FaceTime) for virtual visits to help people stay in touch.

6. **STAFF SAFETY** - Effective Thursday, 3/19/2020, at all certified NHR residences, NHR required all staff to have their temperature taken prior to the beginning of their shift and if their temperature is greater than or equal to 100.00 degrees Fahrenheit) they will be sent home and will send any staff home if they develop a fever during their shift. In addition, in all certified homes, NHR's staff are checking the body temperature of people receiving supports twice daily (once daily in supportive apartments) and responding in a manner prescribed by OPWDD and local departments of health if fever (temperature greater than or equal to 100 degrees Fahrenheit) is present.

7. **HYGIENE** - We continue to provide education to staff on the importance of frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizers and are requiring staff to educate people receiving supports on these techniques. We continue to monitor sites to ensure that staff are regularly disinfecting frequently touched surfaces (including phones and computer keyboards used by staff and the electronic devices used by people receiving supports).

8. **ADMIN OFFICE (WEST ROAD)** - To help ensure that all necessary business supports can continue to be provided, we have limited staff presence at the West Road administrative building, allowing staff to work from home and for those remaining at West Road have instituted social distancing protocols to reduce physical proximity to each other. All staff from West Road, whether at West Road or working remotely, are working regular work schedules (or more) to ensure that all necessary work is accomplished. As with other NHR sites, staff are being educated on the importance of frequent handwashing and the use of hand sanitizers and are ensuring that frequently touched surfaces are disinfected daily.

9. **GROUP MEETINGS** - We have cancelled all staff training for the remainder of March and April except general orientation (and in general orientation, limit attendance and use social distancing protocols) to reduce the burden on our programs releasing staff for training and to limit the number of staff members from different sites from being in physical proximity to each other. As previously communicated, NHR will refrain from holding large congregate meetings and will not send staff to conferences outside of NHR until the situation changes. **This means that we will not be holding monthly Leadership Meetings until further notice.**

10. **MAINTENANCE & IT SUPPORT** - To limit the potential spread of coronavirus into and among our sites, NHR will limit and defer to another time all non-emergency requests that would require Maintenance or IT team members to go into our sites (they will be doing plenty of exterior work in the coming weeks!). Examples of maintenance emergencies include no heat, no hot water, plumbing issues that cannot be resolved by staff onsite using a toilet plunger. Staff who believe an emergency maintenance issue exists should call: Angelo Barcia. Angelo will triage calls and ensure that needed

emergency maintenance support is provided. With IT, examples of an IT emergency would be a loss of internet access or no functioning PC/laptops at the site. We are planning and testing workarounds for staff if a timeclock goes down (and will be providing training to staff by email). The IT team will triage support tickets submitted to: [itsupport@nhrny.org](mailto:itsupport@nhrny.org) or if email is not available and you believe an IT emergency exists, may call Vicki Smith and Vicki will ensure that needed emergency IT support is provided.

11. **EXECUTIVE TEAM** - We continue daily (often twice-daily) executive team check-in conference calls to assess the internal and external environment and to act as required.

12. **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT** - We continue to have a weekly call-in meeting with NHR's program management team from throughout NHR to share information, respond to concerns and ensure that everyone is aware of what actions we are taking. We share this information with all NHR staff, the NHR Family Group and NHR's Board of Directors weekly.

13. **NO DIAGNOSED CASES OF COVID-19 AT NHR** - To date, no person receiving supports has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and we are unaware of any staff member having been diagnosed with COVID-19. We understand that this could change and when it does, NHR will act in a manner consistent with requirements of the applicable local department of health and OPWDD. We will take steps to ensure that NHR staff who are ill know that it is NHR's expectation that they stay home from work. We will ensure that full and part-time staff are paid (using PTO/PSB even if they have exhausted their balance) while out because of illness that may be related to SARS-CoV-2 and will ensure that relief/on call workers are paid administrative leave if they callout for a scheduled shift because of illness that may be related to COVID-19. On PTO, we are saying that for staff who may have exhausted their PTO or do not have much, we will allow a negative balance (which will be offset by future accruals) if needed to reduce the likelihood of the situation where a staff will report to work sick. Relief staff who do not have PTO may on a case by case basis be granted paid admin leave for missed scheduled shifts to avoid them coming to work sick. This is again, generally consistent with CDC recommendations and protects all at NHR. Unless a staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19, they may return to work without a doctor's note if they have been free of fever for more than 24 hours. If a staff member has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, NHR will follow the recommendations made by the local department of health.

14. **ESSENTIAL WORKER STATUS** - I am sure that you have heard about Governor Cuomo's Executive Order requiring **most businesses** to keep all workers home. Please be advised that NHR is exempt from those restrictions. Please see the attached guidance from OPWDD that clearly states that all agency staff (including administrative/office staff) needed to support the essential functions of NHR's mission is exempt. **As such, it is important that we continue reporting to work and carry our NHR ID cards with us to ensure that we encounter no difficulty in traveling to and from work. If anyone cannot find their NHR ID card, please reach out to Diane Capizzuto in our HR Department by email at [dcapizzuto@nhrny.org](mailto:dcapizzuto@nhrny.org) or phone at 845-473-3000 Ext. 1338.**

15. **REMAINING SAFE** - One way that we can keep ourselves, our families, co-workers and people we support safe is practicing the same techniques at home that we do at work: frequent handwashing (and use of hand sanitizers), regular and frequent disinfecting commonly touched surfaces, covering your cough and avoiding unnecessary public interaction with larger groups.

16. **EDUCATIONAL WEBINAR** - The NADSP has recorded a webinar called “The Role of the DSP and The Coronavirus” that includes very helpful information presented by a physician. I request that **all staff** at NHR, during an appropriate time during their work shift, view this 34-minute webinar. The link to the webinar is here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ud4Q4e\\_hcuw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ud4Q4e_hcuw)

Thank you for your partnership in helping to ensure the wellbeing of all members of the NHR community as we face this challenge together. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at (845) 473-3000 Ext. 1310 or by email at [info@nhrny.org](mailto:info@nhrny.org).

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