To: All Persons Served and Families Served by Lifeworks

From: Daniel Burke, President & CEO

RE: Flu/Virus Updates

Date: March 12, 2020

I am writing to keep you informed of the current information regarding the outbreak of the Flu and Covid-19 (Coronavirus) that we have. Last week, I sent out an advisory as to the plans of our agency in addressing this matter. If you did not see it then, I have placed this memo on our website. There is a link on the website to take you to our memos. Please note going forward that this will be the timeliest place to find information. Our website address is www.lifeworksma.org.

As you may know, on Tuesday, Governor Baker announced that Massachusetts is now in a public health state of emergency in regards to this virus. Many of you may have questions regarding what DOES THIS MEAN and WHAT DOES IT NOT MEAN in terms of our programs and services. Please note that this situation is evolving on a daily and sometimes more often basis. We will be meeting regularly and providing updates.

Here is a quick summary as we understand it:

**What Does it Mean**

1. All staff, whether you work in a day program, family support, family autism center, office staff or other program of Lifeworks should report to work as scheduled each day. Our employees are considered essential employees who, as a part of our team, are valuable in ensuring the health and safety of the people we serve. A state of emergency only keeps people from reporting to work if it is a weather or public safety issue specifically when people in our area are in imminent harm’s way. An example of that would be a blizzard.
2. A state of emergency, as it relates to public health, means that the Governor and the state government now have a greater role in getting the resources necessary to support our Commonwealth.
3. It means that the Governor can access emergency funding to help support the increased costs involved with supporting cities, towns and public health facilities in meeting the needs of our Commonwealth to deal with this crisis.
4. It means that if you have not gotten the flu vaccine yet, you are being advised by the Dept. of Public Health to get the vaccine.
5. Lifeworks will continue to increase our cleaning and preventive measures at all of our sites. This includes all of the tips listed on the memo of 3.4.20.
6. Staff or individuals who develop symptoms, should use an abundance of caution and stay home, get treatment and wait until all symptoms of the issue are resolved. Likewise, if you think you have been potentially exposed to the Coronavirus, by being exposed to someone who was in an at-risk area or country, then you should follow the advice of the public health officials and/or Centers of Disease Control (CDC).

7. The agency, in preparation for this issue and in following the guidance of public health officials, have stockpiled important supplies such as hand soap, cleaning fluids, disinfectant, Clorox wipes, and hand sanitizer. We have increased our cleaning schedules.

What Does It Not Mean

1. It does not mean the Governor is definitively going to close our programs, nor will we be closing our day programs at this time. We will be following the directions of the government and local public health officials. We will keep you posted if we receive different information.

2. It does not mean that the Covid-19 is out of control. In fact, over 80% of the people tested specifically for the Covid 19 in the state as of Tuesday, who were prospective cases have been found to not have the virus. In addition, the number of people who have the Flu or stomach virus, far exceeds Covid-19. Yet, we do understand the intense concern and will do all we can to keep you informed.

3. It does not mean that we must stop having the people we serve access our local communities or participate in employment or volunteer opportunities. Of course, we will follow the directives of the public health officials and use caution in attending larger events or locations that could be considered a high risk situation.

Lifeworks will continue to follow the information and guidance provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, through their website- Mass.Gov/covid19 and through conference calls with the state and trade organizations. We will be adding a section to our website www.lifeworksma.org that will provide our latest updates. We encourage all families and staff to use these two sites for the latest information.

This situation is one that is changing daily, the guidance from the State Department of Public Health and the CDC is changing daily. Our senior leadership will continue to have regular meetings to discuss and assess our plans, as well as to gather input from all resources as to how we can best support our programs and communicate with everyone.

Lifeworks has an important role in the lives of the people we support and our families. We will make decisions that are the best informed that we can and will always make decisions that will be in the best interests of the people we serve, their families and our staff.

Thanks again for your incredible dedication to the people we support.