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Dear Family Member,

While reviewing the region's progress toward reopening, we remain diligent with all precautionary measures to protect the people we support and our staff. The safety and well-being of people the agency supports, and our employees, remains the highest priority of People Inc. We have been following NYS OPWDD's policy restricting all but essential visitors to our group homes. This practice has resulted in a fraction of positive cases as compared with other areas.

That being said, we know that even with access to video visits and calls, it has been difficult for families to not visit their loved one in person for this duration. We have planned precautions to take, in order to introduce outdoor visits that provide the best measure of safety possible.

When and how will I be able to visit my loved one? Will there still be restrictions?

For everyone's safety, there will still be restrictions. Prior to visitation, and where available, a **designated location on the property** will be identified for visits. Staff will help arrange comfortable seating that is at least six feet apart to practice appropriate social distancing. Where possible, back decks and porches can be used. To avoid contact with other people living in the residence, families should stay away from the entrances/exits. For safety reasons, families will not be permitted inside.

Will I be able to just stop by my loved one's group home or do I need to let staff know in advance? To allow for adequate planning, visitations are **required to be scheduled with at least 24-hours' notice**. Please call ahead to make arrangements. Our team will discuss with family members the best options for a positive visit for everyone involved, including a possible window visit for the first time.

How will you determine if a family member can visit?

In order to keep everyone safe, staff will perform COVID-19 screenings of family members by phone prior to visitations and **within 48-hours of the visit**. Please understand that your honest answers to these questions are necessary in order to keep your loved one safe, as well as those they live with and those who provide care to them on a daily basis.

When we visit, do we still need to be social distancing?

Yes, our team will reinforce social distancing requirements with families. Unfortunately, if these are not followed, staff will need to terminate the visit. Guidelines include:

- Family members must wear faces masks, practice social distancing, with **no prolonged** hugging, kissing or holding hands.
- Family members are required to bring their own face mask to wear during visits.
- We continue to encourage virtual visits via various technology, such as with FaceTime, Zoom and Facebook Messenger. Additionally, the People Inc. Advocacy Department is assisting people who receive support to stay connected and informed through Zoom video and phone conferences.

More →

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Rhonda Frederick President and CEO

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Will the Visitor Policy requirements be reviewed with families?

Yes, staff will continue to review policies with families over the phone prior to the visit and again upon your arrival. Your cooperation and assistance is needed to protect everyone's safety. It is critical to your loved one's well-being, and the health of everyone else in group homes, that policies are followed. People Inc. has gone to great lengths to implement and adhere to various protections. These protections may change as the pandemic continues. Please follow these restrictions:

- Visitation will be limited to **two hours**, daily between the hours of 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., including weekends.
- Only one family may visit a residence at a time and no more than two family members per visit.
- Visits will occur outside the home **ONLY**. Restrooms of the group home will not be available.
- Visitations will not be allowed in a vehicle. Taking a short walk in the community and safely participating in backyard recreational activities are allowed.
- Meals are not allowed to be shared during visits, other than small, single-serve snacks (which doesn't involve sharing).

Are staff being screened and tested?

Our top priority is keeping the people we support and our staff healthy and safe. Staff have been provided with guidelines and required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) appropriate to their responsibilities. Daily health screenings are performed on staff before entering a group home residence, administrative buildings or other agency locations. Employees are required to monitor their health and follow increased cleaning protocols. We closely monitor people we support for symptoms and address any situations quickly. This includes utilizing the People Inc. Telemedicine Program, which helps quickly assess medical concerns without automatically transporting people to crowded healthcare centers.

What cleaning measures are you taking?

People Inc. continues to take all of the safety precautions that have been outlined by state and county health officials to help minimize risks and mitigate the spread of the virus, including and enforcing enhanced cleaning protocols. The furniture used during the visit will be thoroughly wiped down before and after each visit, to ensure everyone's safety.

As you know, this crisis has caused many tremendous difficulties. Our frontline staff have been incredible, while providing support for people for whom we care so deeply. As a reminder, our dedicated email address and phone line is available to share COVID-19 related concerns at COVIDconcern@people-inc.org or 716.817.7445. You can also contact the senior residential supervisor at your loved one's home. We will continue communications to help keep families informed. On behalf of People Inc., we look forward to the day we can all be safely back together.

Be well and safe,



Rhonda Frederick
President and CEO, People Inc.

Please note that due to the fluid nature of this pandemic, visitation is subject to change at any time. We may be forced to suspend visitations if conditions worsen in the future.