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April 16, 2020

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Dear Family Member,

As we are well into our second month of experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the community, I want to assure you that People Inc. has continued to focus 100% of our attention on our mission to keep the thousands of people we support on a daily basis, healthy and safe. As you know, the virus poses more serious consequences for individuals with chronic and underlying health conditions, which reflects so many of the people we support.

Overall, our longstanding Emergency Management Team continues to meet twice daily to proactively access resources, provide staff guidance and implement coordinated actions. This structure has allowed accelerated planning and contingency preparations, so that our frontline staff have support in their critical work. Appropriate protective equipment has been secured and sent to sites along with training on use. Thankfully, we also piloted and implemented the use of telemedicine for our group homes several years ago, and these practices have provided the ability to quickly assess conditions and provide expedited medical guidance on the spot, avoiding unnecessary trips to crowded community healthcare settings. It has also allowed for us to be proactive in putting extra supports in place, as needed.

I can't say enough about the intensity, vigor and teamwork that our staff has demonstrated over these weeks. Frontline staff have made many personal sacrifices to be vigilant in creating the most safe havens for those we support. Staff have worked long shifts and have been extremely flexible with frequent changes in this fluid environment. They have been creative in arranging alternative ways to support people, ease anxiety, reinforce healthy practices and a sense of security, in unusual circumstances. Above all, they have aligned completely behind a singular intention to do our very best to safeguard the health and well-being of those we support.

The new distance that has become part of our everyday lives is also something we are working to address. Our staff continues to be in regular contact with family members whose loved ones are home with them, to offer a wide range of support. We continue to offer support through phone counseling, online training and webinars, resource packets, in-home support with behavioral services, grocery shopping, and finding other creative ways to help during this time. Please continue to stay in contact with the senior residential supervisor and staff as you have questions or need assistance.

Keeping in touch with family and friends is important to maintaining well-being, and thanks to a donation from OTG Management we have been able to deploy over 100 tablets in group homes for those that don't have their own devices. We are encouraging virtual visits with family and friends through FaceTime, Zoom and Facebook Messenger.

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Our Advocacy Department has been doing outstanding work to help people we support stay connected and informed, through online Zoom video and phone conferences. An Advocacy Phone Line has been established for people we support to ask non-emergency questions, share what is on their minds and receive assistance. The phone number is 716.322.7070; messages are monitored 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. There are also a number of Family Caregiver Support sessions being conducted and we post them on our website. Recently, Parent Advocates together with agencies have been successful in working together in advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be allowed to have a support person with them if they are admitted into the hospital. We're grateful to everyone who worked so hard on this, along with OPWDD and the Department of Health for taking action.

Please continue to reach out through our agency's dedicated COVID-19 phone line and email at 716.817.7445 or [COVIDconcern@people-inc.org](mailto:COVIDconcern@people-inc.org). We value connecting with family members and will continue to share information and ensure your questions are being addressed.

Be Well and Safe,

Rhonda Frederick  
President and CEO  
People Inc.