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July 22, 2020

**Si necesita esta carta en español, por favor, vea: [people-inc.org/coronavirus](https://people-inc.org/coronavirus)**

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 policy and guidance from NYS OPWDD and the Department of Health, in addition to best practices and a data-informed agency commitment to safety. This approach has resulted in a fraction of positive cases as compared with other areas.

**Can I visit my family member at their group home? Are there still restrictions?**

Yes, family visits are now taking place. For everyone's safety, there are some 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 and outdoor visits will be encouraged, weather permitting. To minimize contact with other people living in the residence, families will be provided with special guidance at the time of the visit, and restrictions may be in place based on the site layout, etc.

**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, as multiple arrangements need to be coordinated. Our team will discuss with family members the best options for a positive visit for everyone involved.

**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. The People Inc. Advocacy Department continues in assisting people who receive support to stay connected and informed through Zoom video and phone conferences.

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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.
- Taking a short walk in the community and safely participating in backyard recreational activities are allowed. Families can take loved ones on home visits, as well, observing screening guidelines pre- and post-visit.
- Meals are not allowed to be shared during visits indoors at the group home.

### **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, day program, 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 visits will be thoroughly wiped down before and after each visit, to ensure everyone's safety.

As you know, this crisis has caused many 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](mailto:COVIDconcern@people-inc.org) or 716.817.7445. You can also contact the supervisor at your loved one's home, day program or service location. We will continue to post updates on the website, hold family conference calls, reach out proactively and be available for questions to help keep families informed.

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.