



Where your world opens up.

December 2, 2020

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

Dear Family Member,

Our focus remains on the health and safety of the people our agency supports and for our staff, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve.

While many People Inc. services remain in full operation, others have been suspended or significantly altered. We were able to implement a planned and gradual reopening of some of our programs in the fall. However, due to the recent combination of new regulations and acting out of an abundance of caution, we have returned to “quarantine status” for some of our services.

It takes all of us working together to limit and contain the spread of this virus, which may have serious effects on your loved one, people they share programs with, your family and our staff. We need your help:

- Please ensure mask-wearing when your loved one visits or is in the community.
- If travel is involved, observe isolation and quarantine directives as advised. With upcoming holidays, please take a conservative approach to planning. Also, please note that, as of November 4, travel guidelines have changed, allowing out-of-state travelers to New York to “test out” of the mandatory 14-day quarantine. More information can be found on coronavirus.health.ny.gov. Please note that this can rapidly change, as per state guidelines.
- Don’t send or accompany a loved one to program, if they are sick or exhibiting [symptoms](#).
- If you have not already done so, please strongly consider getting a flu shot to reduce susceptibility of your immune system. This also helps ensure healthcare providers respond to the influx of COVID-19 cases, without the added burden of treating additional patients for the flu. We’re doing our part to make flu shots available to people we support and staff, and they are widely available throughout the community.

People Inc. continues to monitor community experience with COVID-19 exposure and our region’s numbers of positive cases and hospitalizations. We have been operating in a proactive manner with a range of precautionary measures since early spring. As there have been recent spikes in positive cases in our region, please remain advised that progression, pause or reversal of our program opening/operations and protocols will be determined by our Emergency Preparedness Team, based on constant monitoring and regulatory guidance. Updates may be made rapidly as a result. Please visit our website at people-inc.org/temporarysuspension for more information. Latest updates include:

- **New York State has released information regarding COVID-19 “cluster zones,”** which are designated focus areas based on geographic positive case prevalence. The People Inc. Emergency Preparedness Team is proactively engaged in monitoring any potential changes in our service areas (from Yellow to Orange or to Red) and will adjust agency policies accordingly. [This chart](#) includes more information in greater detail.
- Due to the increase of the community spread of COVID-19, **all community outings for People Inc. Day, Respite and certified Residential Programs were suspended as of Monday, November 16, 2020, until further notice.**
- **Thursday, November 19,** was the last day of attendance at our **certified Day Programs** for all attendees until further notice, regardless of where they reside. We will now offer people virtual programming from their homes. There is an exception for Contract Manufacturing, as this involves people we support who are essential workers.
- While some Day Programs remained operational, as of **Wednesday, December 2, 2020,** operations were suspended for all remaining day services and respite sites, as [indicated on this chart](#).

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- **As of Friday, November 20**, we will place restrictions on visitors to our **residential sites**, meaning that only essential visitors will be admitted. Families may arrange window and virtual visits.
- **Starting Friday, November 20**, any family members wishing to take their loved one home from a residential site, will be required to keep them for a minimum of four days before returning them to the site (This is also for families who wish to have their loved one at their home after Friday, as well.). Prior to returning to the residential site, people we support will need to have a negative COVID-19 test result within four days of returning. KSL Labs has been able to provide a faster turnaround of testing results than some other options.
- Community Habilitation and Self-Directed Services will continue in accordance with community guidelines reflected on New York State resources: [Maps of Cluster Zones](#) and [Restrictions](#).
- **As of 12:01 a.m. on Friday, November 20, 2020**, we closed several of our site-based and recreation Respite Programs. As of **Wednesday, December 2, 2020**, operations were suspended for all remaining respite sites (please see related [areas](#)).

Thank you to the many families who have participated in our agency conference call updates over the past few months. We have another upcoming Informational Session for families that I encourage you to join. It will be held on **Monday, December 14, at 6:30 p.m. EST**. Operational updates will be provided, along with answers to your questions, which can be sent in advance and during the call, to COVIDconcern@people-inc.org or texted to 716.868.9233. **The conference call number is: 1.607.442.6488 and the code is: 671 284 480#.**

During a past agency conference call, questions were shared about our People Inc. Foundation COVID-19 Relief Fund (people-inc.org/covidrelief). It was established so that we can continue assisting thousands of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, special needs, families and older adults. A recent directive by the Division of Budget was made to withhold 20 percent of State-only, non-Medicaid funds to providers, which will potentially hurt people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by putting certain necessary services in jeopardy. We continue to advocate for non-profit organizations, like People Inc., to receive Medicaid funds in stimulus plans and loan assistance. Supporters are encouraged to contact the New York State Governor's Office by calling 518.474.1041 and leave this message:

"The recent directive by the Division of Budget to withhold 20 percent of State-only, non-Medicaid funds to providers will potentially hurt people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by putting certain necessary services in jeopardy. Please direct DOB to reverse the decision on the 20 percent withhold. Thank you, Governor."

Agency updates are continually posted on the Coronavirus section of our website, people-inc.org/coronavirus. If you have questions or concerns, please speak directly with program management, use our dedicated email at COVIDconcern@people-inc.org or our general Coronavirus Phone Line at 716.817.7445. We have also established a special Day Habilitation and Vocational Services COVID-19 Phone Line to receive your questions at 716.529.6505. Our Advocacy Phone Line is also available for people we support to ask non-emergency questions by calling 716.322.7070.

Your support is appreciated as we continue to work together through this extremely challenging time.

Be well and safe,



Rhonda Frederick
President and CEO, People Inc.