



## Agency Status Update – March 23, 2020

I'd like to start this update by explaining the rationale behind actions we have already taken, and that may be required going forward. The main consideration in all decisions has been to provide the greatest level of protection from exposure to Covid-19 possible for our clients, our staff, and families. Let's start by recapping what we've done:

- Implemented changes in our operations before Covid-19 was seen in our service area.
- Closed our Community Integration Services (formerly LECO) and held our clients back from attending other day programs. This was done to keep our clients free from potential Covid-19 exposure.
- Restricted admission to our Winslow Office to staff assigned to that office or with necessary business in the office. This was to keep our Winslow Office staff free from potential exposure.
- Required that all meetings involving staff and individuals who are not on staff or not our clients have staff involvement by telephone or video conference.
- Restricted visitation in group homes following federal guidelines, and recommended clients and guardians accept the same restrictions in our supported living sites. This was to keep clients and staff free from potential exposure.
- Provided updates to all staff on practices to limit the possibility of exposure to any virus, including Covid-19. This followed CDC guidelines on handwashing, sanitation of surfaces, and social distancing.
- Identified administrative staff whose work was not immediately essential to agency operations and trained those staff so they could serve residential clients if needed. This was to prepare for the need for additional staff to cover shifts if staff needed to self-isolate.
- Increased the supply of food and cleaning supplies in our residential sites, and began stocking additional nonperishable food, paper goods, and cleaning supplies in the Winslow Office to be prepared for additional needs in our residential sites.
- Advised all staff to reconsider any travel plans they had, along with the notice that we could require 14 days of self-isolation and symptom monitoring upon their return home. This same requirement was put in place for clients who travel away from their primary residence. There is no way for anyone to know if they have had contact with a Covid-19 carrier, and the risk of that increases with any travel. This was implemented to continue protecting our clients and staff from possible exposure.

- Staff working in group homes are being screened upon arrival to work every shift. This includes having their temperature taken and recorded.
- Clients showing any flu-like symptoms are having their symptoms and temperatures monitored and recorded at least twice daily.
- Families and guardians were advised that they would need to have alternative plans for supports if we had to decrease or discontinue services. As you are likely aware, family members can become employees of LIFE*Designs* and be paid for supporting their loved ones. If you are interested in more information about this, please contact our Director of Human Resources, Heather Bagshaw, at [hbagshaw@lifedesignsinc.org](mailto:hbagshaw@lifedesignsinc.org).
- We have been working with the American Red Cross and other community agencies to develop plans in the event we need to isolate a number of clients.

There are now several confirmed diagnoses of Covid-19 in residents of Bartholomew, Monroe, and Owen Counties. Although we implemented protective measures prior to these diagnoses being made, this makes it necessary to not only continue practices already in place but to ramp up our responses and expand our planning. Changes in daily operations and future planning will continue to occur, sometimes with limited advance notice. This is a very fluid situation, and we must respond quickly in order to continue to protect our clients, staff, and families from potential exposure to Covid-19. Changes being implemented at this time:

- Effective at 12:01am tomorrow, March 24, all “discretionary” PTO for staff is cancelled. PTO for documented illness will be approved. Other PTO requests will be approved if required by law. The availability of staff is a key concern during this situation.
- Staff will be receiving “essential worker” letters from their supervisors. This letter plus your LIFE*Designs* employee ID badge will authorize travel to and from LIFE*Designs* work assignments. The letter includes contact information for your supervisor and the main office in the event law enforcement wishes to confirm the reason for your travel.
- Staff assigned to the Winslow Office are being decreased to provide greater availability for residential services. As a result, the office will close from 11:30am – 1:30pm Monday through Friday. A dial-by-name directory is available for callers to use when the main phone is not answered.
- We anticipate the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by staff providing direct services being mandated in the very near future.

The world is facing a pandemic situation the surpasses that of the H1N1 flu several years ago. Our only point of reference is the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918. Research has shown that those communities that quickly

restricted travel and prevented outsiders from entering the community were spared much of the sickness and death other communities experienced. Governments at all levels are enacting restrictions on travel and business operations. The Governor just announced executive orders for Hoosiers to “hunker down” and discontinue any non-essential trips, as well as an order that will revoke the license of any food service establishment or bar that does not adhere to restrictions on service. Nowhere are people or companies experiencing “business as usual” any longer, and we are not and cannot be exempt from this.

We appreciate your understanding and support during these challenging times. Residential supervisors will work with parents and guardians to help in the development of alternative care plans upon request.