



UPDATES RELATED TO COVID-19

June 25, 2020

With the upcoming July 4 long weekend, now is the traditional start of summer vacations. Although we have all hoped that COVID-19 would have no impact on our plans for the summer, that was not to be. After seeing a decrease in numbers of new cases, this trend has reversed in many areas around the country. Thirty (30) states have documented increases in new cases and within LIFEDesigns we have seen an increase in the number of staff reporting contact with individuals who had tested positive for COVID-19 as well as staff experiencing symptoms that have been seen with COVID-19.

Despite these increases, I am happy to report that no client or staff member of LIFEDesigns has tested positive for COVID-19. There is no question that this is due to the protective measures we put in place early in the pandemic coupled with our staff exercising care and safe practices outside of work. It's important that we remain vigilant and are cautious about relaxing any of our protective practices in order to protect clients and staff. A summary of our current practices is:

- In all settings we continue to require our staff to wear masks for their entire shift. For most this means procedure/surgical (paper) or fabric masks. Face shields may be worn in place of masks.
- Also in all settings we are continuing active monitoring of staff. This means temperatures are taken and a review of symptoms conducted before the staff member starts their shift. Our Director of Nursing is contacted immediately if this review raises any concerns and she will determine next steps.
- We require all providers coming into settings to adhere to these same protective measures.
- We continue to require staff who travel out of state to either self-isolate for 14 days or to obtain two separate negative COVID-19 tests administered 24 hours apart in order to return to work.
- LIFEDesigns was founded to support community engagement for all those with whom we work. Keeping clients at home all day every day is not what we believe in but keeping our clients safe remains our primary goal. We are constantly reviewing the current information available about the pandemic and the risk it poses to individual clients and clients sharing an apartment or home.
 - For individual clients living alone, we will work with the client and guardian to evaluate risks to the client and staff considering CDC risk guidelines and a client's ability to wear a mask and practice social distancing. If the guardian and client choose to let the client travel out of state, we will review the situation and determine what is our best response if the client returns to their residence. Options that will be considered are having staff utilized enhanced PPE, reassigning staff, or not providing staff for a period of up to 14 days after the client's return.

- For clients living with other clients, we will work with the clients in the home and their guardians to evaluate risks to each client and staff. It is important to recognize that an individual traveling out of state and returning home presents a risk not only to him or herself but to housemates and staff. In addition to the possible changes listed for a client living alone, it may be necessary for the client who traveled to remain outside of the home for a period of up to 14 days.
- If it becomes necessary for staff to use enhanced PPE as a result of a client going out of state, we will bill the guardian for the cost of that enhanced PPE - \$5.00 per staff member per shift.
- In group homes we have evaluated the risk profiles of each client to determine an individual client's risk as well as the risk of the other clients. In some cases it is necessary to continue restricting visitors and travel outside the home. In some cases individuals, after having their temperature taken and answering questions about travel and symptoms, may visit clients in the client's private room or outside in the yard while wearing a mask.
- If a guardian chooses to bring a group home resident on a trip against our advice, we may require that resident to remain out of the home until we believe any risk to other residents or staff has been mitigated. This may be for a period of 14 days or more.

We recognize these protective measures are unusual and perhaps unprecedented, but the situation we face as the result of the coronavirus pandemic is equally unprecedented. *LIFEDesigns* will continue to monitor the situation and review our protective measures frequently (at least twice monthly). It is our goal to provide our clients with opportunities to learn and grow in their communities, and to do so in a manner that limits risks to them and staff.

All of us at *LIFEDesigns* appreciate your understanding at all times and especially in times such as these. If you have any questions about these procedures and how they may impact your family member or have any suggestions that may be helpful in working with your family member, please bring them to the attention of the Team Manager or Service Coordinator. If they are unable to answer your questions, they will work with the Director of Residential Services, Director of Nursing, and the CEO to find and provide you with an answer.

Sincerely,

Russell J. Bonanno, MEd
Chief Executive Officer