

November 17, 2020

To: Our Charles River Center Community

From: Anne-Marie Bajwa/CEO

The Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services is taking a very cautious approach to visitation over the holidays for both visitation in our group homes and visitation to the homes of our residents' families and friends. In light of the surge of COVID-19 cases in congregate living care programs and indeed across the state, we would like family members and others to consider the following new information when making plans over the holidays:

- 1) Areas across the state are experiencing an unprecedented surge in positive COVID-19 cases. As of today, there is a 44% increase in positive cases in the Northeast Region, 17% increase in the Metro Region (Charles River's region), and 22% increase in positive cases in the Southeast Region. It is undeniable that the entire state is experiencing a surge in new cases. There is a 25% increase in positive cases related to in-home visitation in state operated group homes across the state.
- 2) The increase in COVID-19 positive cases is now considered intergenerational, thus the likelihood of transmission is high for all ages. The Commonwealth is limiting indoor gatherings to 10 or less people. Wearing masks is recommended for any indoor gatherings, even within homes.
- 3) The state and CDC recently updated guidance regarding the length of time that is considered an exposure risk from a continuous 15 minutes of contact to an accumulative 15 minutes.
- 4) Charles River Center is now conducting testing for all of our residential staff, including support staff such as maintenance and nursing on a regular basis. In accordance with the state mandated policy, Charles River Center is testing 50% of our staff every two weeks.

**We are very concerned about the possibility that there will be an increase in positive case as a result of holiday visitation. We urge everyone to seriously reconsider your holiday plans. Your choices about visitation, effect your family, staff, and those with whom your family member lives.**

**We prefer that you do not take your family member to your house unless you plan to follow the CDC guidance for a safe holiday gathering: everyone wears masks, social distance even when eating, keep the windows cracked for air circulation, not sharing serving utensils or plates, and practice frequent hand hygiene. Your gathering should be with members of your household only and no more than 10 people.**

The Charles River Center Visitation Policy is amended for the holidays as follows, **effective November 23 through December 10, 2020.**

- 1) No visitations to or from a home that is under Quarantine. We currently have five residences that are quarantined. You are already informed when the residence in which your family members lives is under quarantine. The number of quarantine homes may change with each round of surveillance testing.
- 2) **Overnight Visits-** Any overnight visitation will require testing for the person served to return to the residence. The protocol for this testing is as follows:
  - This testing must be arranged and done by the family.
  - The testing cannot be done prior to Sunday, Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> in accordance with the CDC guidance regarding potential incubation period following exposures. Test results usually take up to 72 hours, so families should expect to have their family quarantine at their home until at least Wednesday, Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - In lieu of families choosing to not do testing, the residents may stay at the family's home and quarantine for 14 days in the family home, following the holiday.
  - Free testing is available at "Stop the Spread" sites, locations that we can provide to you. The tests **MUST** be a PCR test, not the rapid antigen test often available at places like CVS.
  - Charles River Center expects the family gathering in your home to be limited **to members of your household only, who are considered in your current "bubble" of contacts. Families are expected to follow the Governor's guidance restricting family gatherings to 10 or fewer people.**
  - Families who want to have their family member visit their home must complete the Attestation Form and list of potential people that the person will encounter.
- 3) **Day of Holiday Visits-** During the holiday surge period, Charles River Center will continue to follow our visitation policy at each house, both for indoor visitation and outdoor visitation as it currently exists with one change. **Visitors who enter our residences must schedule their visit 72 hours prior to visitation.** Visitors will be one hour in length, in a private area of the house and be limited to two people per visit. Each home can only accommodate one family visit at a time. Testing is not required for outdoor visitation.
- 4) There will be no eating or participation in preparing the holiday meal by visitors in our residences.
- 5) For additional information please call the Residential Management Team involved in your family member's home or contact Joy Reed at [jreed@charlesrivercenter.org](mailto:jreed@charlesrivercenter.org)

- 6) Charles River Center reserves the right to change this guidance prior to the holidays based on current CDC guidance.

In closing, I would like to offer the words of Gov. Baker, who addressed the difficulty of this issue in the following works:

***The decisions we have to make are painful for everyone. But they are necessary in order to disrupt the coronavirus.***

**Governor Baker 11.3.2020**

Stay safe,

Anne-Marie Bajwa  
President and CEO