

August 10, 2020

Dear Charles River Community,

For nearly five months, Charles River's day program facilities have been closed due to the pandemic and the executive order by the Governor. The buildings were closed but our day programming never stopped! We pivoted to virtual programming and outreach services. I am proud of the progression of these services to our current offerings of nearly 35 virtual and remote activities a week. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, but we recognize that for some it's been challenging for a variety of reasons.

Now that the day program financing models were released, we can execute our plan to gradually reopen day programming in our facilities. We have been working for months to create safe environments, develop and train on infectious disease control procedures and protocols, and build our inventory of PPE and cleaning supplies, with strict adherence to CDC and EOHHS guidance for day program reopening. [EOHHS Reopening of Health and Human Services](#)

The state's requirements for social distancing drastically limits the number of persons-served and staff allowed in each facility, therefore we need to prioritize who will be returning to the programs. This determination is made with consideration for the participant's health risk and for those with whom he/she resides, the benefit to the person for in-facility programming versus remote/virtual services, the availability of the family to transport, and the formal supports given at home.

For the initial phases of reopening, we are prioritizing persons-served living with their families who have low health risks, the ability to wear masks, have family transportation available, who want to return, and are not benefiting from remote/virtual experiences. We surveyed family caregivers early in the process to get a sense of when they would be interested in having their loved-one return to the day program. Although the response was low for a phase-one return, it served to start the conversation. Ultimately, there are 7 people returning to the day habilitation program in the first phase.

To ensure a safe environment for staff and persons-served, please review our [Day Services Reopening Safety and Health Guidance](#) and our list of [family and residential providers responsibilities](#) located on our website.

Our reopening dates for each day program is as follows:

- **Day Habilitation: 8/10/2020**
- **Grugan Center: 8/17/2020**
- **Strathmore Road: 8/24/2020**

With the capacity limitations and the related health risks, participants can only return to the program once cleared by the management teams for your program.

Please be assured that remote/virtual programming and outreach will continue at least through December 2020.

After each program is open for approximately two weeks, we will contact additional family caregivers to revisit the risk/benefit for their family member's return in the next phase. Those persons-served with formal supports such as living in community residences, will be considered in the subsequent phases based on the risk/benefit assessment, day program capacity, transportation, and staffing.

Please note that there is no official word as to when transportation will be available, which understandably is a barrier for most.

After reviewing the EOHHS Guidance and Charles River's Reopening Safety and Health Guidance and you have additional questions or concerns, please reach out to me. ***Additionally, I am holding a virtual Zoom presentation of our reopening plan on August 12 at 4 pm. If you are interested, please let me know and you will receive a link and a password. It is only open to the Charles River Community.***

We are all very exciting about the reopening of the day program and the ability to see people in-person. It has been such a long time since the group rooms were filled with laughter and chatter. It comes with both excitement and apprehension for the unknown. The unknown in this instance is the ever-changing knowledge about the coronavirus. The CDC has been and continues to be our guide in infectious disease controls. It has served us well even in the height of the pandemic in Massachusetts.

Our staff have been amazing in their adherence to the procedures and protocols. It has been *ten weeks* since our last positive COVID case! I am exceptionally proud of all Charles River's employees for their cooperation and unwavering commitment to the health and welfare of each other, persons-served, and their families throughout the pandemic. We all must work together to make the reopening of day programs successful!

Regards,

Anne-Marie Bajwa
President and CEO