March 13, 2020

Individuals, Families and Guardians:

Over the past several weeks The Arc, like most organizations, businesses and families have watched and monitored the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The Arc of Anchorage first and foremost cares about the health and well-being of our Arc individuals, family members, guardians and employees. With that in mind, on behalf of our Board of Directors, senior management and employees, The Arc is using a layered approach to conducting business. We are trying very hard to balance taking the current situation seriously while enacting precautions and being pro-active while not contributing to the worry and fear it has and is creating here in Alaska and across the globe.

We receive our information from a handful of places such as Center for Disease and Control (CDC), the State of Alaska (SOA), the Federal Government, The Arc of the US and other Arc affiliated chapters, where their respective states have already experienced or are currently experiencing exposure and have designed plans to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Our layered approach will guide us in prioritizing services based on health and safety i.e., group homes and supporting living. In addition, our plan considers areas of The Arc that will not continue temporarily allowing us to reallocate employees to cover other services. In short, we will more than likely be canceling some special events and/or some services based on recommendations that are in the best interest of public health, including those we serve and our employees. Please see our attached list of event cancellations.

In the event The Arc has to cancel additional events and/or services, we will post information via our agency’s website and social media platforms and possibly making direct phone calls as may applies. This is inline with what many of our sister organizations are doing. Our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter links:

www.facebook.com/thearcofanchorage | https://www.instagram.com/the.arc.of.anchorage/
https://twitter.com/The_Arc_ANC | Agency website: www.thearcofanchorage.org

Currently, The Arc is operating business as usual using our layered approach with the intention of providing as many of our quality services while taking CDC recommendations in minimizing risk and exposure to the best of our ability. We are encouraging anyone who shows any signs of the illness to stay home, follow CDC protocols and seek medical attention; we have attached some helpful information for your review.

Recognizing this is a challenging time for everyone, please know that we will keep you updated as we are able to. In the meantime, self-monitor, wash your hands vigorously and regularly, and hopefully we all stay healthy and avoid this virus from negatively impacting our community.

With warmest regards,

Barbara Rath
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Event Cancellations

Due to public health concerns with COVID-19, The Arc of Anchorage will cancel our public events and recreational outings through the month of March. This includes:

- March Dinner (March 13)
- Beartooth outing (March 14)
- Coffee With a Cop at Cassie’s Place (March 18)
- Census Poster Making (March 19)
- March Dinner & Dance (March 27)
- Sleeping Lady Dancers & Drumming (Thursdays in March)

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. We will provide updates when they are available.

For other community events, the Anchorage Daily News is listing cancellations here:

https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/2020/03/12/heres-a-list-of-alaska-events-that-are-canceled-or-postponed-due-to-coronavirus/

Municipality of Anchorage - Facility Closures:

Homemade Bleach Solution

Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
- Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
  - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.
  - Otherwise, use products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims (examples at this link) that are suitable for porous surfaces
Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness.

Symptoms* can include:

- FEVER
- COUGH
- SHORTNESS OF BREATH

*Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

Seek medical advice if you develop symptoms, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

For more information: [www.cdc.gov/COVID19-symptoms](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19-symptoms)
COVID-19 communication for behavioral health staff and providers

Behavioral health providers: COVID-19 outbreak information
During widespread infectious disease outbreaks – like the coronavirus pandemic the world is seeing now – many people experience feelings of distress. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) recognizes the important role that behavioral health providers play in helping Alaskans through this global public health emergency. That’s why we’re contacting you today to provide information about the outbreak, so you have the information you need to meet the mental health needs of your communities.

About COVID-19
DHSS is closely monitoring the rapidly emerging outbreak of COVID-19, a respiratory illness first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in late December 2019. Cases have been identified in a growing number of locations around the world, including the United States.

The virus spreads from person to person and has the potential to cause mild to severe illness and death. There are still many unknowns about this new virus, but at this time, spread of the virus is understood to happen:

- When an infected person coughs or sneezes next to others
- Through close contact (e.g., hugging, kissing, shaking hands)
- Possibly by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, nose, or possibly eyes

Symptoms are likely to appear 2-14 days after exposure, and include fever, cough and shortness of breath.

More information about the disease can be found at www.cdc.gov/COVID19. Updates on the evolving situation in Alaska can be found at http://coronavirus.alaska.gov.

Behavioral health needs in our communities
As you know, it’s normal that people may feel anxious, sad or angry as a result of the news and events unfolding. Any disaster causes anxiety, but unlike many disasters, the evolving and long-term nature of this situation has the potential to put everyone under a great deal of stress for an extended period of time. The heightened emotions that arise due to news about the outbreak can lead to unhealthy behaviors and responses from the increased stress.

Proactively share resources with your patients and communities that can help them identify and address stressful responses, such as these:
• **Coping with Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks**
• **Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health: Tips for social distancing, quarantine and isolation during an infectious disease outbreak**
• **Talking with Children: Tips for caregivers, parents and teachers during infectious disease outbreaks**

Connect people with helplines that offer crisis counseling and support:

• **Disaster Distress helpline**: 800-985-5990
  SAMHSA’s Disaster Distress Helpline provides 24/7, 365-day-a-year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters, including infectious disease outbreaks.

• **Alaska Careline**: 877-266-4357 (HELP)
  Careline is a free, confidential and 24/7 suicide prevention and someone-to-talk-to line for Alaskans by Alaskans.

**Prevention & Preparedness**

While there are currently no known cases of COVID-19 in Alaska (as of March 12), as transmission occurs in more places around the world and in the United States, it is increasingly likely that cases will occur in Alaska. Understanding what actions Alaskans can take to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses and how to prepare can help them feel more in control during these uncertain times and help to alleviate some of their distress.

Steps everyone can take to prevent contracting respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19:

• **Wash hands** often with soap and water; if not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
• **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
• **Avoid contact** with people who are sick
• If you’re sick, **stay home and avoid close contact** with others, and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing

Prepare yourself, your family and your community by having an emergency kit and plan. Use and share the resources below:

• **Prepare your health website** (CDC)
• **Preparing for a pandemic** (DHS)
• **Get Your Household Ready for Pandemic Flu guide** (CDC)
• **Get Your Community Ready for Pandemic Influenza guide** (CDC)
• **Planning Guidance and Checklists** (CDC)

Thank you for all you do to support the behavioral health needs throughout our communities in Alaska every day and during this outbreak. We encourage you to stay informed by following updates from DHSS, CDC and other trusted public health officials, and to do your part to fight any fear, stigma and misinformation that may arise. Responding with calm, thoughtful planning and intentional action will help us all get through this outbreak.

3/13/2020