September 28, 2021

RE: COVID Impacts on service delivery update

Dear Individuals/Family/Guardians and Friends:

I hope all is well for each of you! On behalf of our Leadership Team and staff, I wanted to update you on how the current pandemic impacts our agency and how we are dealing with it.

Like many of you, after a year and a half of navigating through this pandemic, we have all learned a handful of things, such as the importance of getting vaccinations, wearing masks, taking temperatures, washing hands, and social distancing to name a few. These are the many action steps we have and are taking during the course of our daily operations to help mitigate COVID-19 exposure.

In addition, we are still offering routine weekly testing every Tuesday afternoon here on our main campus for staff and individuals who receive services. We have also put up refreshed signs around the building and bathrooms offering reminders about the above and many hand sanitation supplies and have staff sanitizing throughout the day and evenings. We have implemented similar practices in our group homes.

Despite mitigation, we are still seeing a rise in cases statewide and here in our local area. This continues to take its toll on our ability to meet our service delivery needs as we move staff around to help cover services in our group homes as we are mandated to ensure 24/7 coverage. Many additional staff such as Case Managers, Team Leaders, and Directors are taking additional shifts to help support our amazing and dedicated frontline staff.

Along with the havoc the pandemic is creating, you may have also heard and/or noticed that we have both a national, statewide and local workforce shortage across many industries like social services. This, too, has impacted our ability to offer the robust services to which you are accustomed. Please note this is not just an Arc issue; it is an issue for all community providers. We continue to advertise in various virtual and non-virtual places, offer a referral bonus for staff, and, more recently, a signing bonus for frontline staff.
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I am sharing all of this with you to give you an update and offer you additional insight and understanding in hopes that you feel driven to help with advocacy efforts for yourself and or your loved ones. Ric Nelson, myself, and other key staff have been advocating on several issues such as Better Cares Better Jobs Act, COVID Impacts on our industry, workforce shortage, and the spring hacking that occurred twice on the states technology systems impacting the Background Check Unit in delaying the required checks of staff approving them to work within our industry.

If you are interested in joining our advocating efforts to help keep appropriate pressure on our legislatures to keep our provider communities at the forefront of their decision making you can do so in a few ways:

1. Contact Ric Nelson, Advocacy & Outreach Manager 907-777-0195 or melson@thearcofanchorage.org
2. Contact your local Representative at www.akleg.gov
3. Contact your local Senator at www.akleg.gov
4. Contact our state Congressman Don Young at https://donyoung.house.gov

Thank you for choosing The Arc of Anchorage to provide services for you and for your ongoing patience and support during this unprecedented time. If you have further questions, concerns or compliments, please contact your Case Manager, Team Leader or Program Directors as may apply. We wish you continued good health and safety during this pandemic period.

Genuinely,

[Signature]

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