

May 18, 2020

To Lifespire Staff

The Coronavirus pandemic has rocked the world off its foundation. Global economies are in a worldwide recession. The United States has had the highest rate of unemployment since the Depression. OPWDD had us close our day programs on March 18, 2020. Governor Cuomo issued an Executive Order and had all of New York State shelter in place.

Last week Governor Cuomo decided to extend the NY PAUSE to June 6<sup>th</sup>. We were all hoping the state's shelter in place would've ended this past week. Most of us were disappointed. I thought we could start thinking about a new normal but a different kind of reality began to set in.

Reports trickled in that states and countries that had loosened restrictions were seeing more infections. In Germany alone, they tripled in one day. There were the public health officials warning Congress on live TV about the risks of rapid re-openings and the lack of a timetable for a vaccine.

So we wait, and wait, and gain weight, but eventually businesses will reopen.

I agree with the Governor. We need to be thoughtful, have measured reopening plans, prioritizing those businesses and people most affected by stay at home orders, that will put New York State on the path to recovery.

The individuals we support have been impacted greatly by the shelter in place orders. They are unable to see their friends and socialize after work. They have no access to the greater community - religious services, restaurants, movies, and sporting events, to mention a few.

We, as staff, too, are greatly impacted by the NY PAUSE. Many of us have child care concerns or may be caring for an older frailer family member. Some of us may have our own health concerns.

There have been continuous reports of a second wave, which may be more destructive than what we are experiencing now. Still, even without a second wave, most agree that society and business may not return to normal for quite some time, if at all. This means that Lifespire should not think of the coronavirus crisis as a single event but rather as a recurring disruption to which we will need to adapt quickly and continually.

A potential second wave will also amplify the challenges of the current pandemic.

- Will schools shut down again?
- Will OPWDD shut down all Day Services again?
- Will families want to risk sending their loved ones out to a program or receive staff into their homes?

We are utilizing "Zoom", Teams, and "Go to Meeting" to reduce the physical coming together for meetings. We have purchased additional iPads for staff to utilize to perform day programming.

I welcome any idea(s) from anyone about how we can improve the services we provide or can be a more efficient work force. Please feel free to email me at [tlydon@lifepsire.org](mailto:tlydon@lifepsire.org) or call me at 917-215-4839 to share your insights and ideas.

When I ponder the thought of the possibility of a second wave, I am worried. That worst case scenario has become Lifepsire's motivation to prepare for that possibility today in order to survive tomorrow. We have a long history of supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and, with everyone's help, we will continue to do so in the future.

To every staff person out there on the front line - thank you for showing up, thank you for caring, thank you for your creativity, thank you your kindness, thank you for your sacrifice, thank you for your smile!

With Gratitude,

Tom Lydon