

Memo

May 15, 2020

To: All WACOSA stakeholders
From: Steve H., Executive Director
Re: COVID-19 Update

We wanted to check in with all of our WACOSA stakeholders on the current COVID-19 situation, as we know it. While we don't have any specific news to share, it would be fair to say we are heartened with the Governor's recent comments about the potential for reopening many segments of society in the coming weeks. We are checking with our contacts through MOHR, our state association, to learn what we can about the intent of Governor Walz's comments and to determine how these comments pertain to our services, in particular. Right now, we understand the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) will be reviewing Preparedness Plans created by organizations to determine what, if anything, must be changed to ensure the health and well-being of organizations who eventually reopen their doors for service. Our plan has been prepared and is ready for review.

While we cannot yet share an exact timeframe, we hope you also feel a sense of confidence in the tone of the governor's recent comments. Presently, we are in the process of developing plans to once again begin serving our clients using a phased in approach. Phases will be constructed considering such factors as determining those clients who wish to return to work and where individuals are located geographically. We are working cooperatively with a number of our key residential providers to ensure the plans we are drafting do our best to balance out the choices of our various stakeholders, while keeping in mind our responsibilities for operating a program that places safety and health as a top priority. As you can imagine, this takes time and is challenging, given the many individuals involved and consulting relating to this process.

In the coming days and weeks, we will be constructing a list of items that will need to be completed to enable us to, once again, provide WACOSA's trademark services. We fully anticipate the need to adjust many of the ways WACOSA has historically provided services (i.e. using PPE, developing social distancing of work stations, sanitizing schedules etc.) to ensure that everyone, to the best of our abilities, remains healthy and safe. We ask that you remain patient and somewhat flexible once services do commence. Please remember WACOSA served just shy of 700 clients in 2019. This represents a wide range of needs all based upon the unique aspects each individual, as well as their respective circles of support. While we will do our best to meet the needs of all of those we serve, reintegration plans will take time to unfold entirely. For example, we anticipate many clients will not wish to return to services until the COVID-19 pandemic has more fully run its course. Others may wish to attend immediately. Challenges to arrange efficient transportation routes must be addressed resulting in the timing and make-up of routes being adjusted. These are but a few of the issues we will be tackling as the time for re-opening approaches. Your patience will be appreciated.

Please stay connected with WACOSA's various sources of information as we move into the summer months in order to get as up-to-the-minute information regarding the re-establishment of our services. Keep in mind the impact on COVID-19 is very different across the state of Minnesota. As a result, you may hear programs who provide services similar to those WACOSA provides beginning to reopen. You may ask why WACOSA has not yet reopened. Please remember that the Governor's executive orders must be considered within the context of the unique health concerns of those we serve and the general environment of COVID-19 infections currently popping up in and around the central Minnesota area. While we are excited and anxious to re-open, we cannot do so in a way that endangers the health and well-being of our clients, staff and community. Feel free to contact any of WACOSA's leadership team for additional information or to get answers to your questions. We hope to commence services once again in the very near future.