COVID-19 RELATED Q&A

PERSONALIZED FOR THE ARC PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY – REVISED ON 4/23/2020

As we all navigate these challenging times together, we recognize staff have questions about our operations. The questions and answers below are designed to provide some guidance.

Please remember: your health and the health of the people we support is paramount. As an essential employer, we want everyone to remain safe, and hope the guidance outlined below will aid you in this effort.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact your supervisor or manager if you have any questions or concerns.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. This is a new virus that hasn’t caused illness in humans before. Worldwide, COVID-19 has resulted in thousands of human infections, causing illness and in some cases death. As the virus continues to spread, there have been cases reported in over 100 countries (according to the World Health Organization aka WHO), including the United States.

Who is currently at higher risk?

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19. Based upon available information to date, those most at risk include:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People of any age with the following underlying medical conditions, particularly those that are not well controlled
  - Chronic lung disease or asthma
  - Congestive heart failure or coronary artery disease
  - Diabetes
  - Neurologic conditions that weaken ability to cough
  - Weakened immune system
  - Chemotherapy or radiation for cancer (currently or in recent past)
  - Sickle cell anemia
  - Chronic kidney disease requiring dialysis
  - Cirrhosis of the liver
• Lack of spleen or a spleen that doesn’t function correctly
• Extreme obesity (body mass index [BMI] >40)
• People who are pregnant

How does COVID-19 spread?
COVID-19 is spread just like colds or flu through:
• coughing and sneezing, which creates respiratory droplets
• close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
• touching an object or surface with the virus on it

Symptoms:
• Fever
• Coughing
• Shortness of breath
• In more severe cases, pneumonia (infection in the lungs)
• Vomiting (in some cases)
• Diarrhea (in some cases)

I don’t have symptoms, but was recently in contact with someone who tested positive?
At this time, if you are not having any symptoms (asymptomatic), you will not be tested, due to limited resources. Please stay home and self-quarantine for 14 days.

I am showing symptoms of COVID-19?
Please DO NOT REPORT TO WORK. Please contact your supervisor to inform them you are sick. Call your doctor or emergency room before you go. Tell them about your close contacts. Wear an ear loop mask or simple surgical mask. You can also wear a scarf if a mask is not available. Your doctor will provide additional guidance for you.
I work in a home and a person I support is showing symptoms of COVID-19?

If the person has difficulty breathing, call 911 immediately. Ensure you are wearing a face covering (i.e. mask or scarf). Do not place a mask on someone that is having difficulty breathing.

If they are showing other symptoms, but their breathing is not labored, call the nurse for guidance before calling 911. Please ensure the person is isolated until you receive further instructions.

How can I protect myself and others?

There is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. So, it is important to take everyday preventive steps that are always recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illnesses like colds, flu and COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using standard cleaning practices.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your sleeve, or your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you are sick, stay home except to get medical care. Inform your supervisor of any illness.
- Practice social distancing. Avoid crowds. In a group setting, it is best to provide at least 6 feet of space between individuals.
- At home, where feasible, isolate yourself to a single room. Your caregiver should take the necessary precautions when interacting with you.

How is The Arc handling compensation for COVID-19 related situations?

All staff who are in self-isolation in a Residential home will be paid for all hours **minus 8 hours each day for sleeping.** For payroll purposes, use pay code COVID-In.

Any staff who are not working and are remaining at home due to self-isolation will **ONLY be paid if they were scheduled to work and missed a shift during their self-isolation.** For payroll purposes, use pay code COVID-Out.

I have work to do, but I cannot come to work due to childcare issues or I am fearful about catching COVID-19?
We understand the childcare issues COVID-19 has created. We also understand the fear of exposure. However, as an essential employer, our operations must continue. Given this, if you are not on furlough because there is work available to you, you are expected to report to work and may be subject to disciplinary action for refusing work. Additionally, you will not be paid when you do not work and you are not eligible for unemployment benefits if work is available and you are not working.

Where appropriate, some staff may telework in accordance with the telework guidelines and expectations.

**I am on a full or partial furlough, what do I need to know?**

Please refer to the letter your supervisor or manager provided to you. You also can contact the Human Resources Department with your questions.

**I have a question about unemployment benefits?**

Given how quickly legislation is unfolding around benefits related to COVID-19, please contact the Maryland Unemployment Office directly for answers to any questions. Their current telephone hours are from Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 3:30 pm. Beginning Wednesday, April 1st, 2020, our Claims Centers telephone lines will be further extended and open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. To contact a Claim Center, call 410-949-0022.

LINK for Q&A: [https://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/claimfaq.shtml](https://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/claimfaq.shtml)

**During this crisis, what will happen to my unused leave?**

Normally, use or lose leave must be taken by June 30th. However, this deadline is being extended until September 30th for this year. Meaning, you will have until September 30th to use leave that you might otherwise lose.

**What should I do if a family member(s) wants to visit a home?**

Currently, we are not recommending visits by anyone outside of those working in the home. In emergency situations, please contact your manager for guidance on how to handle visitor requests.

**What extra precautions do I need to take while working in a home?**

To avoid cross contamination, you should report to work with clean clothes. Spray or wipe down your shoes, which should remain on to avoid a tripping hazard or foot injury.
Program managers visiting their group homes should take the same precautions. Additionally, program managers should not visit more than one home per week.

These precautions are in addition to the aforementioned ones in this Q&A.

I work a second job and they are requiring a medical clearance for me to return to work there because I was on self-isolation with The Arc. What do I need to do?

To reduce the spread and exposure to the COVID-19 virus, The Arc is strongly discouraging staff from working multiple jobs, especially in another healthcare setting or for another provider, as it increases your chances of exposure. Nonetheless, when you have been released from self-isolation from our agency, any medical clearance you may require should be requested from your physician.