

Message from Patti Carlesimo, Executive Director

September 1, 2020



I hope that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy. It is hard to believe we have been in this pandemic experience for 5 months! Thankfully, our Agency continues to be able to provide services (limited to virtual in some cases) to our infants, children and adults. We realize how difficult, frustrating and exhausting it must be for many of our families and how much our students and clients miss socializing with their friends. We miss seeing everyone and empathize with you! It has been very challenging but I can assure you that we have developed extremely comprehensive re-opening plans for the Agency and each service so that when we are given the green light we will be ready to open. Our facilities have been transformed to achieve social distancing and protection via plexi-glass screens, and air purifying systems for our HVAC systems have been installed. Additionally, we have included all of the CDC guidelines in our re-opening plan, including but not limited to, screening staff and participants, training and use of personal protective equipment, and enhanced sanitization and cleaning schedules.

Our Residential services have been open and we are very fortunate that our clients are healthy and safe thanks to our vigilant and caring staff! Our Adult Day programs are technically closed, but are increasing virtual or remote opportunities for clients and families. Staff is working very hard creating stimulating and engaging activities to serve our clients. The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), our funding source, has not provided a date for re-opening at this time. We participated in developing guidelines for re-opening programs with the state through our trade organization, Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities (ABCD) which is currently being reviewed by the state.

Our Schools enjoyed a virtual extended school year program over the summer with a theme of “Around the World”. I had the pleasure of seeing some photos of children as they toured Antarctica and learned about polar bears...so exciting! As you know, the Governor has allowed Districts to create plans for re-opening schools with a virtual option for parents. We have plans to re-open our schools virtually and phase in onsite services from Monday through Thursday with remote-only learning on Fridays. Swivl cameras have been installed in the classrooms so that students onsite and at home can participate simultaneously during the school day. Therapy will be provided for students onsite and through Zoom for students at home. We continue to do our best to help our students meet their IEP goals.

Child Care opened as of August 17th with a small group of children/families participating. Staff and management worked diligently to ensure the environment was ready; staff was trained, families were informed and trained, protocols were in place, and the re-opening plan was followed. We know how critical child care is for the working parent and although centers were able to re-open on June 15th we took extra time to plan for a successful and safe opening.

Early Intervention is operating primarily via telehealth; however, the Department of Health (DOH) recently allowed for center-based services for families who are interested. LADACIN has approximately 20 interested families across the two counties and some have initiated services. It is very controlled with one parent, one child and one staff allowed in the room where masks and gowns are worn and social distancing is in place. Rooms are sanitized between appointments. DOH is requiring training on health and safety protocols in preparation for a return to face-to-face services. The tentative date for initiating these services is September 1st.

In addition to our program activities, Facilities, IT, Human Resources, Finance, and Development and Community Relations departments have been preparing our buildings for re-opening, procuring PPE, managing IT needs of all staff, ensuring Human Resources policies are up to date, managing changing revenues, working with auditors to complete fiscal and workman's compensation audits, and procuring grant and fundraising dollars to support our programs.

Our Directors have been very busy planning for re-opening their programs. It is a difficult task as directives and guidelines change frequently. We are blessed to have such amazing leaders and such dedicated staff. I have full confidence that we will not only survive this pandemic but that we will come out of it stronger. This is attributed to the dedication of our Board, our Administrators and our remarkable staff. Thank you and stay well.