

# Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.

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April 7, 2020

To All Beaverbrook STEP Employees,

I am writing you to express my sincere thanks for all of your sacrifice, commitment and devotion to our individuals during these past few weeks. During this time, I have had many conversations with our management team and direct support professional staff regarding your ongoing concerns and I want you all to know that I am listening. I continue to work with local, state and federal entities to obtain the most up to date guidance regarding our response to Covid-19 and make the most informed decisions possible. I know these decisions that are made by our multi-tiered Leadership Team have a direct impact on your daily work and your personal safety. At some point, it becomes less about platitudes and thanks and more about concrete action and support. I am hopeful that the following initiatives will help to provide a measure of support to those of you who are doing so much to keep our agency moving forward, while providing exceptional care for our individuals and your own families.

## **I. Information Regarding PPE, Supplies, Quarantine Plans and Nursing Guidance**

### **a. PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)**

As you are most likely aware, the shortage of PPE in the state has been well documented. Beaverbrook STEP has been soliciting multiple sources to obtain the necessary masks, gowns and gloves needed by our professionals. We have ordered and secured a shipment of N95 masks, gloves and other protective equipment, some of which is arriving this week. In the meantime, we have been attempting to locate other sources for masks in particular. We currently have a confirmed order for 2400 masks to be delivered within the next few days with 3,000 more arriving 10 days later. We do have a limited supply of masks available and we have been attempting to get those out to programs where individuals and/or staff have been sick or quarantined. Once we have the equipment, we will ensure that all programs have enough for all staff and individuals. This pandemic has stretched the resources of all front line responders and we will continue to pursue all available avenues to obtain essential PPE. Please continue to follow all previous guidelines regarding social distancing, disinfecting schedules and universal precautions until we can obtain the full supply of PPE we have ordered.

### **b. Supply Delivery**

Many of you have raised concerns about travelling to supermarkets and bulk warehouses to shop for essential items such as disinfectant, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies and paper goods. Over the next two weeks there is expected to be an influx of new Covid-19 cases and the state has recommended that people limit their travels to stores. Although we are essential employees, it does not protect us against the potential threat that any other member of the community faces. Beaverbrook STEP has implemented a distribution program to help reduce the need to travel for essential supplies. All programs will be able to pick up a portion of the supplies listed above at the main office beginning Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **c. Covid-19 Quarantine Plan**

Beaverbrook STEP has outlined specific guidelines for any program serving a resident with a confirmed case of COVID-19. The program will close off all areas used by the ill person. Other household members should stay in another room or be separated from the resident as much as possible. If able, the individual will be isolated to their own floor or room. Other household members should use a separate bathroom. If only one bathroom is available, staff will clean and disinfect between each use. A deep clean of a program will be required if an employee or resident is confirmed to have COVID-19 and was present there while they were

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symptomatic. Outside doors and windows will be open to increase air circulation in the area and staff will wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential exposure to respiratory droplets. All "high-touch" surfaces within the program will be cleaned daily. PPE will be supplied and worn by staff whenever in contact with the ill person and during the deep clean.

## **d. Covid-19 Contingency Plans for Off-Site Quarantine**

Beaverbrook STEP has outlined a plan to relocate individuals who have been quarantined due to a confirmed case of Covid-19. In some cases it will be possible to have the individual remain at home with the specific guidelines mentioned above. In cases where we have multiple positive cases and there isn't the ability to care for that person in the home, we have a designated site where we will be able to provide continuity of care for those affected and protective guidelines for those caring for these individuals. I am hoping that this major step will not be necessary, but I did want all of you to know that we have planned for this contingency should the need arise. If this is necessary, there will be timely and clear communication with you all as to what these steps will include.

## **e. Nursing Guidance for Protection While Caring for a Confirmed Covid-19 Case**

I have directed our nursing department to provide an outline based on guidance from the CDC on how to care for an individual who has tested positive for Covid-19. These guidelines will also include quarantine protocols for other residents and staff who may have been exposed. In addition, there will be reporting guidelines and information on how to protect our individuals' rights as they relate to HIPAA. This email was sent out to all staff and managers on 4/7/2020.

## **II. For Staff: Paid Sick Leave and the Employee Incentive Benefit**

### **a. Emergency Sick Leave**

On April 1, 2020, the Families First Covid-19 Response Act was implemented providing relief for employees who have been affected by the virus. A notice of this act has been attached to this email. On March 30, 2020, Governor Baker declared all Human Service Agencies to be Health Care Providers and therefore exempt from these provisions. This decision was made to ensure a competent and ample workforce in order to continue to provide the necessary services to the most vulnerable individuals in our state. Although Beaverbrook STEP is exempt from these provisions, we have decided to make the Emergency Sick Leave portion of the provision available to all staff. This leave, as illustrated in the notice, provides 2 weeks\* of paid sick leave to all employees who fall under the six categories outlined in the notice. Please note that categories 1-3 pay 100% of wages during the leave and 4-6 pay 2/3 of wages during the leave.

\*A 40-hour employee would receive 80 hours of emergency sick time. A part-time employee would receive the number of hours he/she is normally scheduled to work (20-hour employee = 40 hours of emergency sick time). For those who work a variable schedule, the average number of hours worked per 2 week period over the past 6 months would be applied.

### **b. Employee Incentive Benefit (EIB)**

Beaverbrook STEP has implemented an Employee Incentive Benefit to recognize the hard work and dedication of our staff who are providing exceptional care during this crisis. The following incentive plan will be effective as of the pay period beginning on 4/5/2020.

1. The EIB will be paid out per number of \*actual hours worked up to 80 hours *per pay period*.
2. Any hours worked over 80 in a pay period will not be counted toward the EIB.

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3. The maximum benefit amount will be \$600.00 per pay period.
4. All benefits will be calculated at the end of each pay period and distributed in that Friday's check.
5. All employees who work any amount of hours in a pay period are eligible for the benefit.
6. The EIB is being paid out as an incentive benefit and will not change current hourly rates.
7. This program will remain in effect until July 31, 2020.

Calculating the benefit:

If you work 80 hours in a pay period, you will receive an additional \$600.00 on top of your regular earnings for that pay period. Using these numbers as the maximum benefit, we will calculate benefits for those working less than 80 hours.

**80 x 7.5 = 600 This employee would receive \$600.00 in benefit pay on top of their regular earnings.**

The easiest way to calculate the benefit for hours worked less than 80 would be to multiply the number of hours worked by 7.5. Here are two examples:

**70 x 7.5 = 525 This employee would receive \$525.00 in benefit pay on top of their regular earnings.**

**56 x 7.5 = 420 This employee would receive \$420.00 in benefit pay on top of their regular earnings.**

\*This incentive will be paid only on actual hours worked and does not include any benefit time taken during a pay period.

The Leadership Team and I would like to offer a heartfelt thank you for all that you do. We will continue to honor our commitment to providing you with the tools and information you need in as timely a manner as possible. You, as always, are the backbone of our organization and we recognize the essential need for guidance, information and practical measures to ensure that both you and our individuals are well cared for. This is an unprecedented time in our history and we must meet these challenges with a sense of community, compassion and resolve. We are looking forward to the days to come when we can all resume the course of our daily lives with an enhanced perspective and a renewed purpose.

Sincerely,

Virginia A. Connolly, Executive Director and the Covid-19 Response Team