Hi everyone,

We continue to wrestle with COVID increases in Stark County. Here is the latest update:

* So far, several people supported tested positive for CORONA Virus. One person that we support residentially and several people who attend the Day Supports Program. No deaths.
* There have been many employees throughout the agency as well as family members of employees who have tested positive.
* We are working through each scenario case by case.

***To address the increase in cases in Stark Co, we are:***

1. **Testing Weekly** .

* Friday, October 2nd. (completed)
* Tuesday, October 6th. In Dickinson. **We will want to take advantage of the drive through on this day and do influenza vaccines at this same time for those who have registered for one.**
* Kirsten is working on getting more dates through the State Health Department. We will give as much advanced warning as we can.
* **RATIONALE FOR TESTING:**

During testing, we picked up several asymptomatic employees who were on shift. We took them off shift which reduced the exposure to coworkers and people supported. Thus, a valuable tool!

* Testing notes:

1. With colder weather approaching, we are working on where to relocate the testing.
2. Governor’s addressed ND purchasing 15-minute COVID tests. This is being researched for how or if is available to ABLE.
3. Community testing continues in Dickinson for Tuesday and Wednesdays. We prefer that employees test at ABLE if at all possible. Please respond to our text message with testing date/time to confirm your attendance. If using community testing, you must continue to text the nurse hotline on the date you test along with your results when notified. 701-290-8565
4. **Protective Eye Wear:**

The State Health Department recommends protective eyewear when you are working with people. **This is to protect you (the staff person) should someone you support be positive, and we have not discovered it yet**. This could be a face shield or the disposable goggles. We are implementing eyewear based on the recommendation and increase in number of positives.

1. **Staffing**. As we said previously, we are handling staffing on a case by case basis.

* We are adamant about securing more N-95 masks as we may need them in more situations. For example, depending on the situation, employees who have been exposed but are asymptomatic may be asked to work using increased PPE including a N-95 mask and they may be tested more frequently. **We are concerned about how to cover all the staffing interruptions!**
* We continue with the same precautions:
* Please avoid large groups. If you are a participant in weddings, funerals or other gatherings, **I strongly urge you to wear a mask**. Take note of others who might have symptoms. Keep a careful watch on your own symptoms post event. Check your temp at least daily. Pay attention to the “little symptoms” like a nagging scratchy throat, increased tiredness, or congestion, loss of taste or smell!
* Avoid groups that are outside of your norm or typical circle. Even small groups in casual settings have passed on the virus.
* Outdoor gatherings: Preferred outdoors
* Currently, we are paying COVID Leave for employees who test positive or quarantined if exposed. This could be subject to change per company finances. Anything past 14 days of COVID pay would likely revert to our regular leave policy. Please avoid comparing leave scenarios, each is unique.

I thank you for all that you are doing and your continued dedication to ABLE and the people you support. -Mary Anderson, Executive Director