

An Update by Our Administrator

3/30/20

Thomas Allen is actively taking steps to reduce the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on the people we serve and their support teams, our employees and the community. We intend to continue to provide the same level of quality services while modifying our practices, protocols and policies to heighten the safety of all.

I first want to Thank our leadership at Thomas Allen and all of the individuals providing support to the people we serve, having to now use modified methods and protocols in the provision of services. I also want to extend my gratitude to the families, guardians and case managers that are part of the Thomas Allen team, who are supporting these modified ways of providing services.

Thomas Allen has taken the following actions:

Communications:

Thus far, we have sent three letters to our employees, two from the Administrator and one from the owners. We have sent a letter to our Lead Agencies and one to the individuals that are provided 24 hour services in our homes, their families, guardians and case managers. We have asked that our guardians, Semi-Independent Living Service, Independent Living Service, and Support Service staff communicate to those they serve and their support teams the social distancing strategies and other practices that have been put in place.

We have established internal protocols for communicating when either a person served or employee has been exposed or is diagnosed with COVID-19.

Visitors: All office locations are closed to visitors. We encourage communication to take place via email or phone. At the homes, no visitors with the exception for person's experiencing end of life/hospice or when a visitor is essential for the person's emotional well-being and care. Exceptions are to be approved by the Administrator; for all exceptions, the visitor is to confirm they are feeling well and their temperature will be taken prior to entering the home (must be under 100.4).

Visits to Family/Friends Homes: As of the Governor's announcement that went into effect 3/27/20, all individuals served in our 24/7 homes are to stay home unless they are an essential employee and must report to work.

Face to Face Service Delivery Suspended: All/most services are being provided electronically, eliminating the need to for face-to-face contact.

Essential Activities: All essential activities have been defined and communicated to our employees. All Direct Support Professionals are to continue to report to work as their role/responsibilities are essential to the health and well-being of the people we serve. Those in other positions such as case management, guardianship, community supports (SILS, ILS, In-Home Family Support, Respite) have had their provision of services modified to eliminate and/or reduce face-to-face exposure while at the same time providing the level of service needed. All needed support staff for the operation of services continue to work, mostly from home.

Staffing During Day Hours/Day Programs/Work Closed: We are currently in a good position with the staffing of our homes. We have had communication with day programs, with -plans to utilize day program staff as needed. Thomas Allen employees that have had hours reduced due to less face-to-face contact, have been cross training and working at some of our homes. It is also planned that cross training will occur within our support divisions, should we experience a loss of staff due to illness in these areas. We also have found that many of our part-time employees are reaching out to us, communicating their availability to work – Thank You!

Community Engagement: All staff and those we serve are requested to stay at home and only engage in activities outside of their home for needed activities. This includes those functions as outlined by the Governor and went into effect 3/27/20 11:59pm. We have provided to each of our essential employees a letter authorizing them to travel should they be questioned while traveling between their home and their assigned work site.

Meetings: Meetings and other gatherings that require the engagement of more than one person are being conducted through electronic means. This includes such applications such as Webex, Zoom, Facetime, and others.

Sickness: We established protocols and procedures that staff are to follow should they or a person they serve be sick. In addition, expectations are in place as to when a staff person may return to work after travel.

Sanitization: We have communicated to all employees and are following the guidelines set out by the Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control regarding the containment of contamination. This includes protocol for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, washing hands frequently, covering your cough/sneeze, wearing protective clothing when providing cares, not to come to work if feeling ill, and avoiding touching their eyes/nose/mouth.

Employee Support: We continue to stay abreast of the evolving employee and employer assistance programs put in place by the State of Minnesota and the Federal Government. We have identified potential gaps in benefits and are working hard to find ways to minimize financial hardships of our employees.

Supplies: Thomas Allen's administrative support, human resources, directors, finance and maintenance [personnel](#) have had and will continue to have communications regarding need. They are working in close coordination to secure the supplies needed and delivering them to our homes and office locations. We are in short supply of masks; we have had a number of homemade masks provided for use in our homes. We thank those employees and community partners for being there for us and those we serve! We will continue to work towards securing additional regular masks and N95 masks.

We continuously remain in close coordination with local health officials, county and DHS agents to ensure we have up-to-date information. Our management staff is meeting regularly and will revise protocol as necessary to address this evolving situation.

Thank you for supporting Thomas Allen and those we serve during this time of uncertainty. We are committed to keeping you informed and taking the steps necessary to provide a safe working and living environment.