*A close up of a logo

Description automatically generatedCoronavirus Response Plan*

# Introduction:

This interim response plan is based on what is currently known [about the coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html) [disease 2019 (COVID-19)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html) as of 3/18/2020. The Arc Carroll County will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

The CDC is working in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services and across the U.S. government in the public health response to COVID-19. Much is unknown about how the virus that causes COVID-19 spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. This plan is based on the CDC most recent data and suggested guidelines.

# Corona Virus Definition:

COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease caused by a new coronavirus. Coronavirus is a type of common virus that infects humans, typically leading to a respiratory infection. The disease was discovered in China in December 2019 and has since spread around the world.

This response plan will be used to help prevent workplace exposures (both employees and those served) to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, in non- healthcare settings. The guidance also provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of COVID-19.

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described below to determine risk of COVID-19. The Arc does not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and will maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed COVID-19. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and research is ongoing.) Updates are available on CDC’s web page [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/covid19](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/covid19)

# Current Strategies for The Arc:

* **Sick employees must stay home.** Symptoms of acute respiratory illness include:
  + A fever of 100.4°F or greater using an oral thermometer
  + Cough
  + Shortness of breath
  + Fatigue
* Employees must contact Human Resources to be cleared for return to work.
  + The Arc’s safe and sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and labor laws. We will NOT require employees to find their own coverage when they have a COVID-19 related absence.
  + Temp agencies that provide The Arc with contract or temporary employees will be contacted to reinforce the need for their employees to stay home if sick.
  + Human Resources reserves the right to request a healthcare provider’s note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or return to work.
  + The Arc will maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member.

# Separate sick employees and practice safe distance at work:

* + If an employee appears to have acute respiratory illness symptoms upon arrival to work or become sick during their shift, the staff member’s supervisor must be contacted immediately.
  + The sick employee may be asked to leave and should maintain as much distance from others until this determination is made. This decision will be made in accordance with The Arc’s policy on maintaining staffing ratios.

# Emphasize respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:

* + Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available). All employees will also be instructed to wash their hands frequently. Visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html) and [clean hands webpage](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html) for more information.
  + The Arc will provide tissues, paper towels, and soap. Employees will be instructed to wash their hands often, for at least for 20 seconds.

# Perform routine environmental cleaning:

* + On a daily basis, employees will clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, and program locations; such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs using the cleaning agents (disinfectant wipes and sprays, etc.) that have been provided.
  + Cleaning contractor(s) will be reminded to train all of their employees on the best practices when disinfecting agency workspace and bathrooms.

# Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:

* + Employees are encouraged not to travel out of the state. Any employee who is planning to travel out of the country must contact Human Resources.
  + Employees who become sick while traveling understand that they should notify Human Resources and should consult a healthcare provider before returning to work.

# Additional Measures to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19:

* + Employees who are well, but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify Human Resources and refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html) of their potential exposure.
  + If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, Human Resources will inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 and maintain confidentiality.
  + Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html) of their potential exposure. All information related to individuals and their health status is considered confidential and must be protected under HIPAA regulations. No HIPAA information is to be shared.

# Planning for a Possible COVID-19 Outbreak in the US

The severity of illness or how many people will fall ill from COVID-19 is unknown at this time. As the COVID-19 crisis evolves, The Arc will plan to be able to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of severity and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed. For the general American public, such as workers in non- healthcare settings and where it is unlikely that work tasks create an increased risk of exposures to COVID-19, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low.

The CDC and its partners will continue to monitor national and international data on the severity of illness caused by COVID-19, will disseminate the results of these ongoing surveillance assessments, and will make additional recommendations as needed.

# Planning Considerations

Communication: The Executive Director or their designee will be the ONLY person to communicate with employees and program participants regarding COVID-19. These communications will be frequent and based on information received from either the State of Maryland, Department of Health, Developmental Disabilities Administration, and/or the CDC. Communications will include:

* + 1. reducing transmission among staff
    2. protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications (including those served)
    3. maintaining business operations
    4. minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains

Some of the key considerations when making decisions on appropriate responses are:

* Disease severity (i.e., number of people who are sick, hospitalization and death rates) in the community where The Arc is located.
* Impact of disease on employees and program participants that are vulnerable and may be at higher risk for COVID-19 adverse health complications. Inform employees that some people may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.
* Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members, dismissals of early childhood programs and K- 12 schools due to high levels of absenteeism or illness:
  + The Arc will monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace. Essential employees will be identified as those who can maintain the core essential functions of the department.
  + Division/Department heads will cross-train staff to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.
  + Essential functions and the reliance on vendors/suppliers and the community will be assessed. Alternative suppliers will be pursued if needed.
* Coordination with county Department(s) of Health and Office(s) of Emergency Management will be established.

# Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan:

* In the event of an outbreak, persons served and/or employees will be separated from others. Those served in group homes or personal supports homes will be asked to isolate in their bedrooms unless other guidance from health practitioners is provided. If needed our “Shelter in Place” policy will be activated to separate individuals who are symptomatic, from those who are not.
* If a person served exhibits the symptoms of COVID-19 and has any of the following exposures, they should seek medical attention right away.
* If the individual is also an older adult or has underlying medical conditions, their healthcare provider must be contacted, even if their illness is mild.
* If a residential or support services home is required to relocate due to an emergency temporarily, they must notify the Regional Director for that region of all the individuals that are being relocated, the address of the new site, and provide a contact number for the new site.
* Employees who work in a home with symptomatic people will follow the guidance of the CDC and/or local health department.
* Human Resources policies will be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with public health recommendations, and state/federal workplace laws. If there is a need to be absent from work, non-exempt staff may request to use accrued leave for that time.
* The Arc may consider telework options for certain employees or departments based on organizational needs.
* Essential business functions include:
  + Finance – manage cash and reserves
  + Billing – ensure ongoing financial resources
  + Executive Services – ensure adequate supplies; ongoing monitoring to ensure infrastructure remains intact
  + Programs – if needed, Employment and Day programs will close, and employment and day staff will be reassigned to support Residential & Support Services
  + Human Resources – monitor the health of employees and provide guidance on sick/leave policies; track all outbreak staffing issues
* The Arc’s Emergency Action plan will be set into motion as per that plan. Sheltering in Place policy will be activated as needed. The Executive Director will trigger this response. Executive Staff will maintain contact with local health officials to identify these triggers.
* The Executive Director will communicate information to stakeholders via The Arc’s website and other mediums on our infectious disease outbreak response plans.
* The Arc will anticipate stakeholders and employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.
* The Arc’s Employee Assistance Program is a free and confidential service that is readily available for all employees and their household members. The phone number is 800-327-2251. Employees and their household members can also access the MyBHS Portal online or via the app. The website is portal.BHSonline.com.
* Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies.

**Quarantine guidelines for residential and support services houses**

* Separate the quarantined individual by using separate bed and bathrooms, when possible
* Call and notify health care professionals before going to appointments to notify them that the person with developmental disabilities has or is currently being evaluated for COVID-19
* Ask the quarantined person to wear a face mask while they are in the same room as others, or have others wear a face mask while in the same room as the quarantined person
* Avoid sharing household items like dishes, glasses, utensils, towels and bedding
* Clean hard surfaces and high touchpoints in the home with a diluted bleach solution or EPA-approved household disinfectant at least once a day
* To make a diluted bleach solution add ¼ cup bleach to 1 gallon of water
* Wear disposable gloves while handling soiled laundry or bedding from the quarantined individual. Wash and dry laundry with the warmest temperature recommended on the item’s label
* Limit or restrict visitors who do no need to be in the home

# Screening and Protection:

* As per The Arc’s policy, employees must be physically able to perform their job functions and must be free of communicable diseases.
* For employees working with quarantined persons served, The Arc will provide personal protective equipment (PPE) along with instructions on how to use/wear the PPE.

If the there is evidence of an outbreak in Maryland, group events, gatherings and meetings will be reassessed and possibly cancelled.

This plan and related policies will be updated as new information is gathered. Updates to this plan will be highlighted to ensure changes are easily identified.

Plan date: March 18, 2020; Revision dates: