

April 1, 2020

### Sample Letter to Clients—Provided by HCAOA

The following is a form letter provided by HCAOA, which can be modified for your agency's use. Please make sure to update the content to reflect your Cooperative's actual policies and procedures.

Dear Clients and Families:

**(Organization)** is actively monitoring the progression of the coronavirus (COVID-19) to ensure that we have the most accurate and latest information on the threat of the virus. As you know, this situation continues to develop rapidly as new cases are identified in our communities. Our protocols are being adjusted as needed, and we will be sure to communicate any changes to you.

While most cases of COVID-19 are mild, causing only fever and cough, a very small percentage of cases become severe and may progress particularly in the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions. Because this is the primary population that we serve, we understand your concerns and want to share with you how our organization is responding to the threat of COVID-19.

We are following updates and procedures from the \_\_\_\_\_, the Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and local and county authorities. Our response and plans may adjust according to the recommendations from these organizations.

- As a standard practice, we have an emergency preparedness plan in place. We will continue to follow it as this situation evolves or update it accordingly.
- All caregivers follow established protocol regarding staying home when sick. This practice is not new to our staff.
- Communication with caregivers to assess any known risk factors, such as travel to areas with widespread outbreaks or local contact in areas known to have reported cases are ongoing. We will advise them not to report to work if they are deemed high-risk.
- We believe that home remains the safest place for you or your loved one, as indications show that the virus is spread more quickly in facilities and larger group or public settings. Possible exposure will remain the lowest for those who are able to stay in their homes with limited outside contact. For this reason, we feel fortunate to be able to provide care that can keep people at home or limited exposure in group settings through personalized care and support.
- For clients we serve who reside in facilities or other group-type living situations, we will work closely with the facility on any protocols, exchange of information, or other guidelines as necessary.

- Many of our clients are especially at risk, given they are older adults or have underlying health issues. We are vigilant about our need to help protect these individuals from illness be it the flu, COVID-19, or any other communicable disease. These measures are not new to us as we seek to minimize risk regularly for our clients, regardless of an outbreak such as this new coronavirus.

### **Contingency Planning for You or Your Loved One**

Depending on the severity of the spread of illness in communities or the response taken by national and state authorities (e.g. mandatory isolation, closure of schools, etc.), our staffing levels may be affected. As a result, we may be unable to cover all shifts. We will make every effort possible to provide our clients with safe and appropriate care and seek to avoid canceling shifts, however, we cannot guarantee this will not occur given the uncertainties about this situation.

At all times, regardless of a viral outbreak or other situation, we strongly recommend that our clients have alternative arrangements for the provisions of care in the event we are unable to provide services. We encourage you to begin considering and putting into place back-up plans now, as the severity of the spread of this illness and planned interventions is still uncertain.

### **What You Can Do to Protect Yourself and Your Family**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces.
- Eat well, drink lots of water and get rest to strengthen your immune system.
- Have a family emergency preparedness plan that includes care coverage and back up support, if possible.
- Stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill.
- If you have underlying medical issues that put you in the high-risk category, avoid large public gatherings or other places outside the home. Limit your contact with others.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact \_\_\_\_\_. I want to assure you that we are following all the necessary protocols to protect our clients.

Sincerely,