

CONTACT



NEWS FROM COTTONWOOD

DATE: March 13, 2020
TO: Parents, Guardians, and Family Representatives
FROM: Sharon S. Spratt, CEO
RE: COVID-19 (coronavirus)

Cottonwood's Mission:
“We help people with disabilities shape their own future.”

I am sharing this message with you today to make you aware of the steps that Cottonwood, Inc. is taking in response to the spread of the virus which causes Covid-19 or *coronavirus*.

Cottonwood's Emergency Response Team (ERT) has prepared a detailed response plan in the event that the virus infects staff and/or consumers. Planning for this type of catastrophe is very complicated. It is impossible to identify all potential scenarios and plan responses accordingly. In planning for a pandemic, we have anticipated challenges and identified practical steps to meet them. We are not a medical facility, so our ability to meet critical health needs is very limited. We will consult with the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS), and, of course, private physicians as we go forward.

In this pandemic, we anticipate that many people will either get sick or need to care for those who are sick. As a result, there may be staff shortages. We have no way of predicting what actions authorities may take in regards to congregate settings. It may be necessary to suspend daily work activities at Cottonwood. It may also be necessary to move Residential consumers from their homes to other locations in order to efficiently utilize staff resources and to maximize support for consumers.

We have supplies that have been stockpiled for a number of years now. However, replenishing these supplies has been, and will continue to be, problematic. We will do our best to track down all of the available resources that are available to us.

If we are not able to provide the necessary supports to consumers due to staff shortages, we may ask well low risk families to take their family member home until such a time when staffing returns to a workable level or the threat abates. Some families may choose to take their family member home even before this happens in order to lessen the likelihood of infection.

If Cottonwood needs to cancel activities or events, or even close temporarily, we will do our best to provide timely communication of these actions using various mediums (e.g. social media, website, etc.).

Our hope is that difficult measures will never have to be implemented, but having gone through the planning process, we feel better prepared to meet the challenges.

The people we support are important to us! Take good care of yourselves and your loved ones and we will work diligently to do the same.

Thank you for your past and continuing support of Cottonwood.

Below are some of the steps that Cottonwood, Inc. has already implemented:

- 1) Reporting of illnesses of staff/consumers through our information communication systems;
- 2) Enhanced disinfecting of Cottonwood, Inc. facilities;
- 3) Additional training in hygiene and Universal Precautions for consumers and staff;
- 4) Encourage individuals with flu-like symptoms to stay home and isolation of consumers with symptoms;
- 5) Limited community outings and activities;
- 6) Use of technology for meetings with outside parties, when possible; and
- 7) Broad dissemination of our Pandemic Plan.

I understand your concerns about the health and safety of your loved ones, but there is no need for alarm. Please know that Cottonwood, Inc. is doing everything we can to ensure our consumers and staff stay well and will respond appropriately to support those who are ill. If there is a need to escalate our response in the future, I will communicate these next steps with you.