



January 10, 2022

Ms. Kerri Neifeld

Acting Commissioner

NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

44 Holland Avenue

Albany, NY 12229

Dear Acting Commissioner Neifeld:

We are writing as a follow-up to our meeting with you on December 28th and our prior letter of December 7th regarding the need for accelerated booster administration for people with IDD.

Our CCO Member & Family Advisory Board Collaboration met last week, and all representatives were extremely concerned about the alarmingly rapid increase of COVID-19 infections among people with IDD and their staff. In the latest cumulative data published on the OPWDD website for the week ending 1/5/22, the data indicate 593 infected residents, up from 133 the prior week in 414 locations that house 2782 people, and 1733 staff up from 743 last week who work in 1195 locations - roughly a **tripling of infections for residents and doubling for staff from the prior week, which was already double the week before**. There are no hospitalization statistics available to us on the OPWDD website.

Sadly, there were an additional 5 resident deaths reported that week. While not on the scale we experienced during the early days of the pandemic, any potentially preventable death is a tragedy.

We recognize that you and your team are deeply committed to the health and safety of the IDD population. We appreciate your efforts in coordinating with County Health Departments and promoting booster administration with providers and individuals with IDD. We also welcome the revised guidance for residential visitation and OPWDD's provision of an allotment of rapid antigen tests to residential providers.

Despite your current efforts, the pace of booster administration remains inadequate.

With the accelerating spread of COVID infections, we are again asking for a more urgent focus on booster administration and have the following suggestions:

- **We recommend a more forceful individualized effort with those residential providers who are lagging in booster administration, requiring them to explain the causes for the delay. If they are experiencing logistical barriers, a collaborative approach should be able to address them. They**

should then be required to submit, within a few days, their action plan to reach a specified goal with an appropriate deadline; again, this should be within days, not weeks. They have a duty of care to ensure the delivery of health care to their residents.

- **The CCO's should also be monitored to ensure their urgent and effective outreach to those individuals residing outside of congregate settings, with targeted follow-up to those who lag.**
- **We have learned that some providers have voluntarily implemented a more stringent masking protocol for staff, mandating the use of KN95 masks in their residences. We believe that OPWDD should mandate this protocol in all certified programs in order to reduce COVID transmission as much as possible. These PPE are readily available now.**

Thank you again for your openness to individual and family input.

Sincerely,

Rachelle Kivanoski

Care Design NY Individual & Family Advisory Board

Jackie Sauter

LIFEPlan CCO NY Member & Family Advisory Group

Christina Silva-Soto

Tri-County Care CCO Family Advisory Group

Ann Scherff

Prime Care Coordination Family Advisory Board

Geri Athenas

Advanced Care Alliance Family Advisory Board

Robin Sharpless

Southern Tier Connect, Family Advisory Board

CC: Jihoon Kim, Deputy Secretary for Human Services and Mental Hygiene

