

To all our Staff:

Information and guidelines related to coronavirus pandemic is in constant flux, and we carefully continue to monitor the situation. In Ed's absence, the Board of Directors have been extensively involved in providing direction for the Agency as they met today. The Board remains in contact with Ed, continues to provide him with updates, and seek his input during his recovery.

We know this is a time of uncertainty and anxiety for many of our staff, who are concerned about the health and well-being of their own families, the impact to Agency services, and the vulnerable populations that we serve. Although Head Start has suspended classroom operations, Community Action remains open to provide essential services to our clients during this challenging time. Many program-specific protocols have been implemented to keep staff and clients safe, while following recommendations to limit person-to-person contact. For the present time, we have suspended all visits to or work in client's homes.

**Guidelines for Staff for the week beginning Monday, March 16, 2020.**

1. **If you are a CATS transportation or CSBG (Emergency Services) employee, you should report to work.** Our clients need these vital services now more than ever. Follow all safety and distancing protocols as directed by your supervisor.
2. **Other staff should practice social distancing within your work area, and we ask that you report to work unless otherwise directed by your supervisor.** Staff may be assigned various duties or training activities. We will strive to find value added work for all staff who desire to be working this week. This allows staff to receive regular pay and benefits.
3. **If you do not want to come into work because you have concerns about your safety, are immuno-compromised, or have childcare or family care issues,** you may use vacation time or take unpaid time off. This is consistent with Agency policy and practice. If significant portions of your work can feasibly be performed remotely, you may also discuss that option with your supervisor (and this must be pre-approved by your Director).
4. **If your supervisor does not have any work for you this week,** they will discuss other options with you, including layoff scenarios.

We are taking all actions to minimize disruption to employee pay and to insure that employee benefits will not be affected. Please note that we are currently awaiting additional guidance from the federal government on Employer-Provided Sick Leave and the Family and Medical Leave Act. We are also monitoring any provisions that are being made to NYS unemployment. Once we have further guidance or as things change, adjustments to your vacation balance, if required, will be made retroactively. We will also follow the guidance of local and state agencies regarding quarantines, should that become a possibility.

Finally, we want to remind any of you who may be struggling with anxiety, fear, or stress—related to COVID-19 or any other issue—to please know that you are not alone and there are counseling and support resources through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

We will continue to monitor the situation closely, make updates based on new information, and take steps to keep everyone safe. The directors team and Board leadership will share an updated operating plan by Friday with any changes to be implemented for next week, starting 03/23/20. Your Director will cascade this information to you, so please make sure that your contact information is current. Please check our Agency FaceBook page and the Staff Resources page on our website ([caoginc.org](http://caoginc.org)) for breaking updates as things may suddenly change based on new information.

Thank you for your patience and efforts as we all work together to plan, prepare, and support one another, our clients, and our community during this challenging time. Please do everything that you can to keep yourself and your family safe.

Sincerely,

Veronica Barhite  
Chairperson, Board of Directors