

Letter to the NYC Administration Regarding Essential Needs of the Human Services Sector in Response to COVID-19

To: Daniel Symon, Director of Mayor's Office of Contract Services
David Greenberg, Associate Director at NYC Office of Management and Budget
Jennifer Geiling, Deputy Director for Policy and Partnerships at the City of New York Mayor's Office of Contract Services
Gail B. Nayowith, Consultant

c: Raul Perea-Henze, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services
Melanie Hartzog, Budget Director of Office of Management and Budget
J. Phillip Thompson, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives
Vicki Been, Deputy Mayor, Housing & Economic Development
Dean Fuleihan, First Deputy Mayor of the City of New York

Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of those who participated in the call today for nonprofit membership associations - C-19 HHS Nonprofit Membership Organization Workgroup – I want to thank you for making space for us to discuss the most pressing issues facing the sector during the COVID-19 outbreak. Given the ramping up of social isolation and the need to close many spaces, the guidance sent to us and the information provided on the call is a step forward, but not adequate for the sector to have continuity of operations and best serve staff and clients. We greatly appreciate that there are many moving parts and the situation changes hourly, but the sector cannot wait any longer for action and we need a swift and clear response.

Representatives of the nonprofit sector sent a letter on March 9, 2020 asking for a robust, coordinated, and centralized response to COVID-19 for the human services sector. Throughout this week, we sent questions from nonprofits who have become increasingly alarmed at how to grapple with fear of COVID at their organizations, deciding whether to stay open, and how to pay staff if they do close or if staff need to stay home. The agreement on the call today that there would be continued calls to help us all move together is essential and we look forward to working together in collaboration. However, given the conversation today, and the myriad of questions that remain unanswered in an everchanging environment, the undersigned groups must press you to act and answer key questions now.

- **Agree to pay contracted human services providers their full budgeted expenses through the end of the fiscal year even if they are unable meet their contractual obligations due to this public health crisis.** Providers need assurances they can pay their staff and cover fixed costs and this directive frees them from the stress of worrying about deficits and layoffs in the short term and to focus on coordinating with the City to shift programs to meet pressing needs. It also ensures we do not have a significant workforce going without pay during economic turmoil. This means that we have the staff available to meet community needs.
- **Create and keep current a public list of contracted services that show what is essential and what should close.** Providers need to know that the City has taken their program in to consideration, and need clear instruction on the expectations of the City.
- **For programs that are expected to remain open or operate in some capacity, direct resources immediately so that they can operate safely,** which includes:
 - Cleaning supplies, gloves, masks, provided on demand and clear sanitation guidance so clients and staff are safe

- Staffing plans or waivers, including where backup staff can be obtained, to address shortages if staff cannot come to work
- Fiscal staffing supplement to incentivize high risk work
- A designated helpline for operating facilities to deal with COVID-19 cases
- All human service workers performing in-person functions be designated first responders and thus eligible to access services include childcare and transit
- **City support – both financial and logistical – to deal with congregate facilities that have COVID-19 cases** including security to cope with staff shortages and access to quarantined spaces for symptomatic clients who reside in shared spaces
- **Relieve stress on the sector by:**
 - Immediately paying all outstanding invoices and halt recoupments on advances to promote cash flow; suspend all pre-audits of invoices
 - Stopping audits and suspending RFP deadlines
 - Trust human services providers to keep appropriate documentation of expenses and do not require different documentation
 - Give immediate interest free loans to ensure there is enough cash on hand to pay to staff so these New Yorkers can continue to live safely and provide for their families

The nonprofit sector understands the breadth of the COVID-19 situation and we and our workers are and will continue to serve our communities. Over the coming weeks providers will shift their work and be flexible with their agencies to ensure New Yorkers get the services they need. Right now, we need to give providers clarity around the above crucial issues. We ask that you please give us a response by noon tomorrow; providers are anxious and we have held off external advocacy but will need to pursue other avenues to ensure the nonprofit sector has the answers and resources required.

Sincerely,

Association for Community Living
 Citizens' Committee for Children
 Coalition for Homeless Youth
 The Coalition for Behavioral Health
 Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies
 CPC
 FPWA
 Homeless Services United
 Human Services Council
 LiveOn New York
 New York City Employment and Training Coalition
 UJA-Federation of NY
 United Neighborhood Houses
 Supportive Housing Network of New York

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