

COVID - 19 & Care Coordination Organizations



Our Champions IV

Triumphing Over the Daily Challenges

As the coronavirus crisis continues its rampage across the country, the seven Care Coordination Organizations continue to support over 105,000 individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) in NY collectively, having joined forces in an unprecedented collaborative effort, ultimately placing each individual in the center of outstanding care.

COVID-19 may have struck the world, but as Champions in the fight against nature, each Care Manager is set to triumph over the daily challenges faced by our individuals.

A Light in the Dark

Across the country, state, and our area right now, many families are dealing with a lot of unknowns ranging from whether or not they'll have a job next week, or when they'll be able to get groceries next. For the many families *Prime Care Coordination* and other Care Coordination Organizations serve, these uncertainties are just as present, and it's our job to ease those fears and bring light to the darkness.

Tiffany, a Prime Care Coordination Care Manager, has been working closely with many individuals and families during the COVID-19 crisis, but explains the hardships of a particular family she's been in constant contact with. She says the family of 8 struggled on a daily basis to keep food in the home, even before COVID-19 hit. Now, with food shortages and 6 kids being home from school, the problem has only intensified.

Even with a full workload, Tiffany was able to secure an emergency \$50 gas card for the family, so they were able to get to the local school to receive free meals for the children at home. But that's not where Tiffany stopped assisting this family. She has also been in contact with a local food pantry that delivers food as well as coordinating with the school to see if they are able to help with any resources. Tiffany has even gone so far as to get cleaning supplies dropped off to the family to help protect from the virus.

It's during these times that we truly see the light in others, and we're so thankful for Care Managers like Tiffany, who are willing to help families they support in any way they can.

A Care Manager's Creativity

In a recent conversation, one of the Care Managers at ACA/NY mentioned that she feels the need to do more for the people we support. Acting on her word, the Care Manager used some of the money earned through ACA/NY's incentive program, as well as donations from family and relatives to purchase highly in-demand items like toilet paper, paper towels, cleaning supplies, tissues and hand soap.

The Care Manager then purchased a large bottle of hand sanitizer and small empty travel bottles to fill up and began sewing cloth face masks to include in a supply bag, intending to drop them off at the front door of peoples homes. This Care Manager also made sure to reach out to her colleagues to identify other members in need and traveled across the region to deliver them.

An older gentleman living on his own in the community had been experiencing severe anxiety so the Care Manager dropped off a home-made mask at his doorstep. This allowed him to venture into the community and helped with his ongoing anxiety. The Care Manager hopes to drop off these bags weekly.

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As we hear stories like these, they serve as constant reminders of how caring and thoughtful our Care Management staff is and how important they are to the people they support.



Assisting with Job Placement

The following anecdote was related by a Tri-County Care Care Manager. This Care Manager's prompt assistance finding the individual's father a job avoided major setbacks in the individual's overall wellbeing.

"I am the Care Manager for an individual with developmental disabilities who needs a lot of stimulation and activities to engage his brain and keep him from falling back. As the current situation kept him locked inside the house, he required various items to occupy him at home.

I was in close contact with the individual's father for a while now, having recently conducted an "Assessment tool/MAS" with father and son, establishing effective communication with the parent. Therefore, it was surprising when I received a phone call from the individual's mother letting me know that her husband was laid off from his long standing job and consequently, cannot pay for basic necessities, let alone activities for their child!

"As soon as I heard that, I reached out to a relative that was currently doing outreach for a non-profit organization, who informed me of a temporary job opportunity filling food packages for the community. This position was a difficult one to land, as the job requirements are usually limited to people engaged in outreach, but I was able to vouch for the individual's father and his impressive work ethic, and was given a direct number for him to call. I advised the father to call ASAP so as not to forfeit the opportunity.

"Upon following up with the father, I was pleasantly surprised to hear that he had met up with the program coordinator and was promptly given the job! Now he had a steady income not only for food, but also to purchase necessary stimulation for his son."

This may be an account of a single TCC Care Manager, but it aptly reflects the attitude our Care Managers portray as they go about their daily jobs. It is only with positivity and continuous effort that we can overcome the current situation, one individual at a time.

Challenges for Supporting Children at Home During COVID-19 Amplified for Individuals with Special Needs

The closing of all schools and mandatory stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 emergency health crisis have been especially challenging for individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) and their caretakers. Anything that is difficult for a parent is more complicated for a family with special needs. Some individuals with I/DD can be extremely routine-oriented and thrive on structure. In their absence, disruptive behavior often erupts.

Before the COVID outbreak, a **Care Design NY** member, who lives with her grandparents was thriving at school. Her school program was the linchpin to her well-being.

Unfortunately, her world was immediately impacted on March 17, 2020, when New York State suspended all school attendance to stop the spread of the Novel Coronavirus. Her once daily routine, which included personal and social development opportunities to promote learning and skills development, abruptly ended. These had been instrumental in reducing and mitigating her frustration and resulting aggressive outbursts previously triggered by her inability to communicate.

Her grandparents were unprepared to address this overnight crisis that began to build. Their granddaughter's challenging behavior returned, triggered by the loss of her familiar routine with appropriately designed daily activities and supports for emotional outlets that motivated her and provided stability.

Fortunately, her Care Manager has been able to fill the void and enrich the member's life with regular FaceTime sessions. During these sessions they talk, laugh and review ways to reduce stress, such as drawings to express her feelings. Her grandparents have marveled over the difference in their granddaughter's behavior as she eagerly anticipates the scheduled sessions with her Care Manager.

The Care Manager continues to think outside the box by providing consistent and person-centered support uniquely tailored for her success.



Supplies

During the past few weeks, one of the Care Coordinators at Person Centered Services has been working with a family she supports even more closely than usual. "I understand the struggle that this pandemic has caused for families being a mom myself," the Care Coordinator says. "COVID-19 has changed my work by pushing me to find new and creative ideas to meet the needs of the people I serve."

The family she is providing additional support for consists of a single mom and two children with disabilities, one of whom is on the Care Coordinator's caseload. During the COVID-19 crisis, the mother became sick with an illness other than coronavirus. She was running out of wipes for the kids, had no cleaning supplies, and had no toilet paper. With the approval of her supervisor and director, the Care

Coordinator put together a care package of Lysol, paper towels, baby wipes, and toilet paper to get the family through the week.

The mother was very grateful. She had also ran out of food and was concerned about finding an open pantry as those closest to her were closed. The Care Coordinator found a pantry, called them, and ensured the mother was able to get transportation to access more food.



In addition, during this time the family needed emergency funding for a refrigerator. The Care Coordinator applied through a foundation for a grant for the family to help them buy a new fridge. An approval for a check was obtained and the funds will be mailed to the family.

The Care Coordinator went above and beyond the call of duty for a family in need in ways that transformed their lives during a challenging time. She is thankful for the support she has received in her role from her company.

"The communication and relief at Person Centered Services has been phenomenal," says the Care Coordinator. "I am so proud of our team and all the efforts being made to reach out to those we support."

As basic as... Laundry!

The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) has been stressful for many people, especially for people with a developmental disability.

Having to cope with changes in routine due to the virus, and the impacts of quarantine and social distancing were creating challenges for a particular family that LIFEPlan serves. And then they faced another disruption: losing their ability to take care of their laundry needs.

Jill, a LIFEPlan Care Manager in the Central New York Region, was supporting this LIFEPlan member "Mike" (names were changed to protect privacy) who has complex neurological issues that put him at high risk for COVID-19 infection, as well as his mom "Betty" (names were changed to protect privacy). Betty also has health issues but is able to provide the 1:1 support that Mike requires.

They live together in an apartment but did not have access to a washer and dryer, but Betty was able to use the laundry facilities in her mother's senior living facility to do their laundry. Once the COVID-19 stay-home order went into effect, the senior

care facility shut down to outside visitors, and Betty lost her method of doing laundry. She was also concerned about putting their health at risk by using a public laundromat.

Jill checked with some of Betty and Mike's natural supports to see if they could bring their laundry to someone else's home, but it was not a viable option. Jill then attempted to access Family Support Services funding for them to help buy a washing machine. That request was denied. Jill suggested to Betty that they try to find a used washing machine, so together they began looking at Craig's List, Facebook Marketplace etc. Jill also reached out to her Central NY Care Manager colleagues to see if anyone knew of a washing machine that could be donated. In sharing their need to a wider network, an anonymous donor through a local church offered to pay for a new washing machine, including the cost for installation.

Betty and Mike are incredibly grateful to the donor and to their Care Manager, Jill, who put a great deal of time and effort into finding a solution to their laundry problem!





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LIFEPlan CCO Ny
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Person Centered Services
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