March 23, 2020

Team TCA,

This week a good deal of progress has been made in our response to COVID-19 and supporting the needs of our children, families and clients. These are serious times, and we place the healthy and safety of you and our community at large above all else. We are fully aware that we will need to make continuous adjustments as we work together to respond to this pandemic disaster.

Here are some updates on where we are and where we are headed:

**EMPLOYEE UPDATES**

**Office of Children, Youth and Families (Head Start programs)**
- The Office of Head Start, has allowed Head Start programs to close centers and to continue to pay center based staff during the state and local disaster declarations.
- All exempt OCYF Head Start professional employees are expected to work during the closure. Where possible, exempt, professional employees will work from home remotely, maintaining their regular hours and schedule. Non-exempt employees who are deemed essential personnel may be called upon to work during the closure. The respective managers will contact those employees, who are considered essential personnel and assign them duties as needed.
- OCYF Content Managers are continuously working to identify and provide professional development activities and parent/child activities, to support the continuity of Head Start and the attainment of school readiness and agency capacity (grant goals) during the disaster closure.

**Office of Community & Energy Services & the agency’s Administrative Staff**
- The Office of Community & Energy services is still awaiting a formal guidance from Office of Community Services, relative to grantee’s ability to continue to pay employees while on disaster leave from grant funds. However, as feasible the CEO has reduced onsite work hours for OCES employees exempt and non-exempt effective Monday, March 23, 2020. These employees will be expected to work remotely from home, maintaining their regular hours and schedule.
- OCES food pantry and housing assistance services have been deemed essential disaster relief services by the City of New Orleans, and we will continue to provide these services as long as feasible.

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1 Exempt employees are employees who are exempt from hourly wage laws as defined in Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)and exempt from OT pay. Specifically, that is employees whose annual salary is $35,568.00 or more.
It is critically important that all employees check the TCA webpage for continued updates, and professional development accountabilities. As updates are made, managers will be notified by text, and will be asked to notify their employees by text message alert, if they have the employees “personnel cell phone numbers.” An employee FAQ has been developed and placed on the agency website.

As we have constantly noted, it’s important that each of us is flexible and understanding of each other. In this environment of so many unknowns, the health and safety of our employees, our children and our community are our priority. Thank you in advance for the work ahead, as we continue to support the low income individuals and families, of our beloved New Orleans.

Yours in leadership and service,

Thelma Harris French
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President & Chief Executive Officer