



CASA OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA, INC.

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March 16, 2020

Dear Volunteers of CASA of Northeast Oklahoma,

As you know, COVID-19 or the coronavirus, has made its way to America with more cases being diagnosed each day, some of them in Oklahoma. Although there are no active cases in our area as of today, I do not think it will remain that way. I am closely monitoring the Centers for Disease Control website and have provided clear direction to our staff regarding day-to-day operations. I also wanted to reach out to you, our dedicated volunteers, to communicate directly about the best way to perform your duties during this time of concern.

CASA of Northeast Oklahoma requests that you take this situation seriously. The health and well-being of our CASA volunteers is our paramount concern, as is that of our staff and the children we serve. If your immune system is compromised or if you have underlying health concerns that make you susceptible to disease, please make a plan now with your Advocate Coordinator to cover your caseload. I am advocating a two-pronged approach: (1) for those who are sick to just stay home and (2) for those who are well not to be exposed to illness. If you are sick or if someone in your family is sick and you are responsible for their care, please just stay home. At this time, our offices in Claremore and Miami remain open, but staff has been directed that any persons who are actively ill should not come into the offices. In addition, if the children or members of the household where the children reside are ill, please do not go to the home for a visit. Advocate Coordinators have been granted the flexibility to allow for telecommunication visits (FaceTime or Skype) to occur in lieu of monthly visits, but you must communicate with your Advocate Coordinator to get permission to step down from the monthly in-person visits.

I am gravely concerned about the safety of the children on our caseload. With CDC guidelines to restrict gatherings of 50 people or more, I think we can expect that schools will be determining soon whether to extend Spring Break, cancel classes altogether, or to go online. Learning disruptions aside, I also know that family and economic stressors will increase, causing some of our children to be more vulnerable than they were just a week ago. Face-to-face visits with each child on your caseload continue to be imperative, except where illness prevents it. For the next eight weeks, I am asking the Advocate Coordinators to communicate more often with you and I am requesting that you stay in contact with your Advocate Coordinator about what is happening with your health and that of your family.

I also have asked the Advocate Coordinators to check with the courts to see if court hearings will be cancelled or postponed. Please consult Optima and your Advocate Coordinator for up-to-the-minute information. Emergency hearings can be scheduled as needed. Again, communication between volunteers and staff is crucial.

Of course, if anything changes, I will be sure to communicate. Please know that I am monitoring the situation very carefully from the CDC's website. I pray that you and yours are well and that you stay well. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your Advocate Coordinator or to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angela Henderson".

Angela Henderson
Executive Director