

Updated 03/25/20

Dear Members of the Austen Riggs Community,

My continued thanks and appreciation for your support of the Center during this unprecedented, protracted, and stressful event.

As part of our periodic outreach, I wanted to share some important updates since we posted our last message on March 20.

COVID-19 Status:

There are no known cases of COVID-19 among Riggs patients. One Riggs staff member has tested positive for COVID-19. She became ill and left work on March 10 and her test confirmation came back on March 23. She is doing well, but will not return to the office until cleared. Those known to have had close contact with her include 6 staff members and no patients. Five of the 6 staff members remain symptom-free 14 days from their last possible exposure to this employee and thus are not at risk to develop the illness. The sixth developed symptoms and left work on March 13. She is now symptom-free and working remotely. The administrative team that this person is part of does not have frequent contact with patients and her team members are presently working remotely or in one of our buildings located off-campus. In addition, three other staff members have reported symptoms. One tested negative and has been authorized to return to work. The second and third are under quarantine. One has been tested and is awaiting results. The other is under a doctor's care for an Upper Respiratory Infection (URI).

Campus Access:

In response to strengthened guidelines from local, state, and federal authorities, we have increased our restrictions for patient and staff travel and interactions with people outside the Riggs community.

Day Treatment Program (DTP) patients have been given the option, with team leader approval, either to move into a Riggs building while remaining in DTP or moving to what we are calling Aftercare Plus to receive care remotely. Aftercare Plus includes remote access individual services, a remote access support group that is under development, remote video participation in community meetings, and emergency services that vary depending on whether the patient resides near Riggs or at some considerable distance. The relocation process for those who elected to move into Riggs buildings is nearly complete. We have also instituted plans for monitoring patients' physical health and quarantining/isolating them if needed.

We have asked all our patients in Riggs housing not to leave campus, except to go for walks or essential medical appointments, and to maintain appropriate social distancing. DTP patients who have moved to Riggs buildings will be provided free meals at the Inn to eliminate the need for personal grocery shopping, and, at least for now, they will not be charged rent for staying in Riggs buildings, as we recognize many are still paying rent externally.

We continue with our earlier policy of allowing only essential staff and people making essential deliveries to come and go from campus. Staff who are working on campus also must use social distancing, and limit their travel and their exposure to others to just the most essential needs.

There will be no in-person family meetings, no family or social visitors, and no meetings at Riggs with private outpatients. We have stopped construction at the Inn and suspended all research activities. We have cancelled or postponed all lectures, conferences, and other gatherings through April.

Communication:

We are attempting to provide you with as much information as we can, as rapidly as we can. The sheer volume of information to compile and explain, and the rapid rate at which it changes, have been significant challenges to overcome, but I believe we are making progress. Indeed, communication is a top priority for the COVID-19 Committee at this point.

This web page remains our primary means of sharing updates. We thank all those who have signed up for the [text and email alerts](#) that go out when this page has been updated and we encourage those who have not registered yet to consider doing so.

Again, my deepest appreciation for your patience, understanding, and support. I know it's an extremely stressful time for all of us, but, if we stay together, we can get through this as individuals and as a community.

Stay well,

Eric M. Plakun, MD
Medical Director/CEO