

April 7, 2020

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

The Coronavirus is a challenge like no other we have faced in our lifetime. It is an invisible threat that is impacting our communities and our world in ways we are only beginning to comprehend.

At HCRS, we continue to provide our comprehensive mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability supports for thousands of individuals across Windham and Windsor Counties. We've adapted to this public health crisis through the implementation of advanced technology which allows us to provide services remotely, careful protocols for social distancing, creative online ways to connect with our Kindle Farm School students, and many other new methods of supporting our communities.

During this time of heightened anxiety, our services are even more critical than ever. The Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a poll between March 25-30, which found that 45% of adults indicated this crisis is affecting their mental health. We're seeing people in our communities struggling with unemployment, housing and food challenges, and across the board concerns around health care, school closings, and social connectedness. This crisis has also delivered a feeling of uncertainty and ambiguity. Mental health challenges and increases in opiate and substance use are a given.

However, during a time when our country has become increasingly divided and polarized, this crisis is uniting us. Although the news reports are overwhelming, I see examples every day of people coming together to help stem the tide of this novel coronavirus. Here at HCRS, our Emergency Preparedness Response Team has met seven days a week since concerns of COVID-19 started to reach our region. Their dedication and commitment to our staff and clients has been remarkable. Our devoted staff are still at the front lines, continuing to provide services in creative ways. They are reaching out to people in need with their hearts instead of their hands - through the use of technology - to ensure people are supported during this difficult time.

In our communities, I see organizations working together to develop outside-the-box ways of supporting residents. Every day there are news reports of businesses finding new ways to provide services. People's desire to overcome and create connections is alive and well.

The resilience of the human spirit and the desire to overcome and create connection is alive and well and truly inspirational. This crisis has brought together people in innovative ways I could not have imagined. I, for one, am so immensely proud of our staff, the people we serve, and our communities in these most challenging times, and I know that we will get through this and will become stronger as a result.

Sincerely,

George Karabakakis, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
HCRS