



*Seeking Employment, Equality and Community for
People with Developmental Disabilities*

May 15, 2020

Dear SEEC Staff,

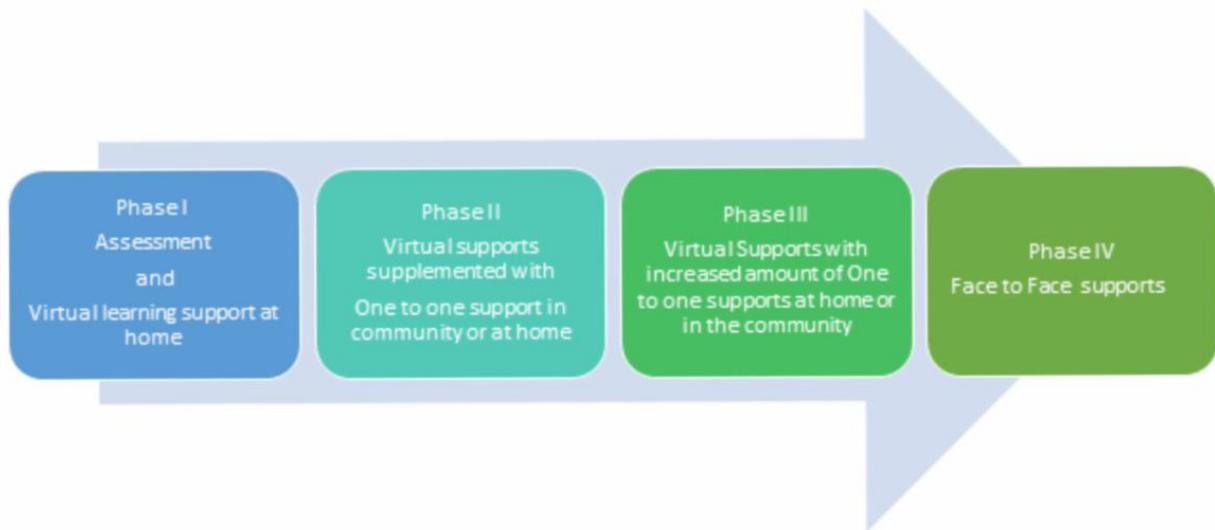
As we enter this next phase where the state starts to loosen restrictions and people start to talk about “reopening”, SEEC will instead talk about “What’s Next?”

SEEC hasn’t stopped providing services throughout this pandemic. We’re just doing it differently. And we’ve learned a lot in the process.

In seeing some of the significant achievements people have made during this time, we’ve realized that the people we support have not only the potential but also the drive for being in meaningful relationships, having paid employment, and having choice and control of their own lives. We have learned that for many people, virtual supports with lessons and socialization have been an opportunity to thrive and show their creativity and talent. To that end, we want to be thoughtful about “What’s Next”.

In planning for “what’s next”, SEEC will need to be thoughtful and create plans one department and one person at a time. To assist the leadership team in working towards what’s next, we have created a four-phase process as we plan for the future.

As of today, we support people in each of these four phases. Some people have never stopped receiving face to face supports, while other have not, and may not, receive face to face supports for the foreseeable future. While we anticipate progressing through each of these four phases with each person we support, the speed with which we will go through the phases will depend upon multiple departmental and individual factors. Some people may go through these four phases and get back to work within a week. Others may not get to Phase IV until a vaccine or cure for COVID19 is identified.



I have asked each of our program directors to share their specific departmental plans with people supported, families and our residential partners. But I would like to share a brief explanation for the four phases.

Phase I: **Data Collection and Virtual Supports**

As we begin to move forward, we are going to start with two assessments. First, we will be assessing if the people we support, their families and our staff are at high, medium or low risk for the impacts of COVID-19 if infected. We want to be thoughtful about exposure for staff, the people we support and their families. If someone is high risk, face to face supports may be limited or non-existent for the foreseeable future.

Also in Phase I, we are assessing the accessibility to technology and the skills of both the people we support and their families as well as our staff. This is a critical step as virtual supports are here for the foreseeable future. It is critical that the entire SEEC community become proficient in using technology. While you may not be able to envision how your son or daughter can use technology, be assured, we will help to figure that out. Virtual supports may help someone watch or join a zoom meeting, and even if they can't participate verbally, being around others is critical for socialization. Perhaps they will listen to their staff read a book for 30 minutes. We ask you to give us a chance to figure out how to provide these distant supports. Creativity is the name of the game.

Phase II: **Supports will continue to be primarily virtual**. Staff will use a combination of the SEEC curriculum, Zoom hang outs, fitness classes and more and supplement with limited face to face supports. Face to face supports may include going for a walk with someone, sitting outdoors or learning to use technology, but only if it is safe for both staff and the people supported to work one on one. The reality is that recreation centers, libraries and volunteer activities are going to be closed. We are going to be working out of people's homes for some time.

Phase III: **Supports will continue to be primarily virtual with increasing level of face to face supports**, specifically for people who are low risk and those going back to their jobs. For example, in the morning staff might host a virtual lesson on cooking with three other people we support for socialization and then later that afternoon provide face to face supports where we could actually bake something to reinforce the morning lesson. In this phase, much like phase 2, it will be a combination of supports but with increased face to face supports.

Phase IV: **Supports will be primarily face to face and supplemented with virtual**

supports. Because of the valuable lessons we have learned about how much people are enjoying the virtual hang outs, curriculum and fitness, we plan to continue virtual supports into the future as it fits into people's personal goals.

We want to be careful that we don't put anyone at risk. Some people will be better at social distancing or wearing a mask than others. We are going to take into consideration many different factors to ensure the people we support and our staff are successful and safe. Ultimately, we're all figuring out this uncharted territory together. Thank you for your trust and support as we begin to re-envision what's next.

Stay safe. Stay well.

Sincerely,

Karen

Karen Lee, Executive Director

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