Dear LPCS Community,

I want to start this communication by saying thank you for everything you’ve already done during this unsettling and unprecedented time. Thank you for reaching out to check on the well-being of our Guests and Staff. Thank you for reaching out and showing up with meals, groceries and goods. Thank you for offering to be physically present and volunteer on-site (even though we can’t do that at this time). Thank you for making donations online. You’ve played an enormous role in getting us through these first weeks of COVID-19 and for that we are so grateful. The work continues from here, and we will continue to need your help.

Our Response to COVID-19 to Date

LPCS houses 83 individuals facing homelessness in interim housing shelters and an additional 37 individuals in permanent supportive/affordable housing, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to preexisting conditions and/or age. Therefore, from the very beginning of March, our team has acted swiftly and comprehensively in response to this developing situation in order to protect the health and safety of our Guests, Volunteers and Staff. We immediately established and implemented preventive hand-washing/sanitizing and distancing protocols, based on guidance from trusted medical professional partners and from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH). We began carefully monitoring the health and well-being of our Guests and Staff, ensuring that anyone exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms be seen by a medical professional immediately. Our operations team immediately implemented a strict cleaning and sanitizing protocol, taking place multiple times each day. Additionally, we implemented strict safety and prevention measures for volunteers. On Friday of last week, we began asking our Guests to stay on-site unless they had to leave for employment or a healthcare appointment.

Earlier this week, in response to the ever-evolving nature of this pandemic, we made the hard decision to no longer allow volunteers on-site and implemented a limited on-site staffing model (with incentive pay) that would be enough to support our Guests while also limiting foot traffic into our facilities. I want to commend our extraordinary staff as we have an abundance of individuals willing and ready to work on-site despite the obvious potential danger due to COVID-19. Our staff working remotely are available to the Guests by phone and by video conference to offer support.
Examples of Immediate Impact of COVID-19 on LPCS & Guests

- **Approximately 10 Guests who had recently gained employment in the restaurant industry were laid off this week.** The last 48 hours have been particularly hard for our Guests who felt like they were starting to get back on their feet and earning enough money to get a place and move out – and now that dream has had a setback. It is tremendously disappointing for our Guests and we are doing lots of counseling.

- **Guests living with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders are unable to see counselors or attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings in person.** As a stop-gap, we have set up private spaces for Guests to attend virtual meetings with their counselors and/or support networks virtually. Additionally, we are engaging Guests in virtual AA/NA meetings. They need this lifeline now more than before the pandemic.

- **Our work is being done with a more limited on-site staff support team.** We can’t ask our staff who have underlying health concerns to work in the facilities. We are getting creative about having them support our Guests virtually and also take on-line training courses while working from home to improve their skills. Staff who are working on site are receiving incentive/hazard pay to continue to provide direct service to the Guests in the facilities.

- **Like many other nonprofit partners, we have made the decision to migrate our in-person Metamorphosis Gala to a live, virtual event to take place on the originally planned date, April 24th.** Stay tuned for more details in the very near future. We still want to celebrate and honor LPCS’s 35th anniversary, a milestone of which we are particularly proud.

How You Can Help

As stated above, we have been floored by the outpouring of support from the community to date. Unfortunately, it appears that this difficult time is far from over, and we anticipate several more weeks of not being able to have all staff and volunteers on-site. Like many of you, it has become difficult for us to obtain much needed supplies, including hand sanitizer, toilet paper, paper towels and other imperative items. And furthermore, we are purchasing additional mattresses and bedding in order to spread out sleeping arrangements to ensure 6 foot distance between Guests, and to set up isolation rooms.

In response to all of this, we are asking you to support our Guests and our tireless team through the LPCS COVID-19 Emergency Fund. Every dollar counts.

We have set a goal of raising $40,000 as we do not intend to lay off any of our incredibly dedicated staff and, as mentioned, are offering incentive/hazard pay to those individuals working at the front lines in our shelters. We anticipate having to do this for a total of 8 weeks. We also know that we will need to purchase extra supplies to support our Guests through this difficult time.

Thanks to you, our community of devoted donors, volunteers, advocates and friends, LPCS has served and empowered individuals facing homelessness with care and compassion for 35 years. Today, in these trying circumstances, we feel more passionate and committed to our mission than ever before.

With gratitude,

Lydia Murray
Interim Executive Director