



Empowering Partnerships For Education

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Dear DCIU and DCTS Staff:

First and foremost, I hope you and your families are happy, well, and safe. As we continue to plan for the reopening of all of our programs and services, it is important to provide an update to my previous letters. As one watches or reads the news, the incidences of COVID-19 cases are on the rise in some areas. The superintendents and I have been meeting with the Chester County Health Department and medical experts from the University of Pennsylvania and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) to keep abreast of the data specifically for our county and for ongoing guidance. This is important as it is assisting the DCIU and DCTS to make informed decisions around any next steps for programs.

By now, we all know that personal responsibility of following masking, social distancing guidelines, and obeying travel restrictions are extremely important to bring down the rates of infection in our country as well as our county. DCIU appreciates everyone's part in following these guidelines. It helps our larger community and the DCIU. It is also our civic duty.

I have had the opportunity to talk to so many staff members who are in person at Morton and other sites. Please accept my sincere appreciation for the diligence everyone is demonstrating on wearing masks, keeping up with physical distancing, and in helping to sanitize your work areas. You are part of keeping DCIU safer and in implementing our Health and Safety plan with fidelity.

There are also many facts floating around about data in Delaware County. I think it might be helpful to provide some more information. Recent data in Delaware County shows some promising information of trends:

- Case counts are fluctuating in Delaware County. There are several data sets the Chester County Health Department uses to look at trends in our county – *Newly Reported Cases, Incidence Rate, Positivity, and Contact Tracing*.
 - *Newly Reported Cases*. For the week ending on August 6, there were 445 new cases reported in Delaware County, which was down from the previous week's count of 513 new cases. [Case counts are the number of people who tested positive for COVID-19.]
 - *Incidence Rate*. The incidence rate on August 6 was 78.8. The Incidence Rate is the number of individuals per 100,000 residents in our county that have tested positive for COVID-19.
 - *Positivity*. As of August 6, 2020, the 7-day positivity rate, which is the number of people testing positive compared to the total number of people tested, was 5.2 %.
 - *Contact Tracing*. On August 6, 167 individuals were in the process of working with the Chester County Department of Health on contract tracing. Through contract tracing, a theme that has emerged. Travel has demonstrated an increase to cases in Delaware County.

Further, on August 10, 2020, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DoH) and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) issued the *Determining Instructional Models During the COVID-19 Pandemic - Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools*. This metrics looks at two of the criteria above (Incidence Rate and Positivity). After the review of these two data sets, the Departments issue a recommendation. The recommendations fall into three categories: Full In person Model of School Opening, Blended (Hybrid)

Learning or Full Remote Model, or Full Remote Learning Model. As of August 10, Delaware County's recommendation was for *Blended (Hybrid) Learning or Full Remote Model*.

Further, DCIU has been working with our families to hear from them how they would like their children to return to our programs. Many families have indicated they would like in person instruction while others would like the flexibility of a virtual model. The feedback from our families indicating they want their children to return to DCIU programs is an important testament to the trust between our families and you! DCIU and DCTS are continuing to develop plans to meet the needs of families as well as all stakeholders, including our school districts.

For the 2020-2021 year, DCIU will take the approach to reopening all of our programs using a scaffolding model. Many programs and services have been in operation for in person instruction and services with success. DCIU plans to continue these services and programs as they are already operating. For some classroom-based programs, DCIU will modify the start of in person instruction by several weeks and provide virtual services for a short time before transitioning to in person. For DCIU programs operating in school district buildings, DCIU will work with the school district and follow their model of instruction. Department Directors will be providing more information on what this means for each program and service DCIU offers.

DCIU is working diligently in implementing our Health and Safety plan to assist in our mitigation efforts in all of our programs and locations to support you, our programs in operation, and programs beginning back after the Labor Day holiday. As DCIU and DCTS is reopening, all staff are expected to begin in person at the start of the school year as per board approved calendars. For some, this has already happened. For other, the date of return is August 31, 2020.

Thank you for all you are doing and in supporting the implementation of our Health and Safety Plan with fidelity. Always remember -- it is critical that we all wear masks when we leave our homes, physically distance between individuals, and increase the hygiene practice of hand washing. It has been shown that these strategies do have an impact on driving down the positivity rate of COVID-19 in our communities.

We look forward to seeing everyone soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Edelberg".

Maria Edelberg, Ed.D.
Executive Director