



A letter from Starfish CEO Ann Kalass | Publish date: Friday, July 31, 2020

Dear Starfish family and friends,

By my calculations, this is week #20 of remote work and operations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Simply unbelievable. Who could have imagined only four or five months ago how much our personal and professional lives would change in 2020?

Thank you, our steadfast supporters, for your perseverance and flexibility as we begin to shift our collective energies toward recovery. And a simple reminder to be part of the solution by wearing your masks, social distancing, and washing your hands!



What We Are Doing: COVID-19 Emergency Response

I remain optimistic because Starfish has consistently remained an agent of change despite all circumstances.

I am pleased to share the the latest **COVID-19 Monitoring Report** (covering the last 19 weeks) with you. [Click to view.](#)

- Provided 25,602 **therapy sessions** to 1,681 behavioral health clients through telecounseling (e.g., by video or phone).
- Connected with 684 of our children's families via 23,625 touch points, such as online **education portals** that include face-to-face time with their teachers.
- Delivered essential resources to community families at five center-based **distribution hubs**---including 51,080 meals & 110,997 diapers.

What We Are Doing: Safe-Start Planning

I remain hopeful because our talented Starfish team has crafted a comprehensive and nimble Safe Start Plan designed to support the health and well-being of employees and the families we serve.

- The plan was informed by parents and staff, who were surveyed to establish a comfort-level baseline.
- The Safe Start Team comprises 50 members, representing a 10% cross-section of voices and diversity.
- The protocols constitute recommendations based on guidance provided by federal, state, and local authorities.
- The return to in-person work and service delivery will follow Michigan Safe Start phased guidelines, and each time an executive order is issued we will review for alignment.

What We Are Doing: First Phased Center Opening

July 28 marked the "soft" opening of one of our locations---the Partnering with Parents Center in Dearborn---for limited ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) services.

- This was an intentional first step since it focuses on families with children on the Autism spectrum. While telehealth has been highly successful for most, in-person interaction is essential for these little ones.

What We Are Doing: Advocating for Change

Noreen Dinwieddie, Starfish Director of Grants Administration, represented Michigan in a virtual congressional visit on July 13.

- Noreen participated in a National Head Start Association forum to discuss current and projected conditions related to COVID-19.
- She had the opportunity to share how early childhood programs have been impacted by the pandemic and the costs associated with a safe re-opening during and after the pandemic.

COVID-19 Can't Stop the Starfish Commitment

We don't know what a "new normal" will look like. We do know we are operating in a world where COVID-19 is reality.

As such, I remain inspired by Starfish's continued commitment to serve as a source of strength for our community. And I am heartened that tomorrow will bring a more just world---because we're working together.

Thank you, again, for being part of the Starfish family.

Stay safe and be well,



Ann Kalass
CEO Starfish Family Services