



Dear Autism Services Community Member,

Autism Services, Inc. has been dedicated to providing the highest standard of service and support for people with autism throughout Western New York for more than 30 years. This has remained true despite the fact that in recent years, Autism Services has faced significant operational and financial challenges that were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier this year, Autism Services approached People Inc., a non-profit organization in Western New York that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, seeking an affiliate to provide assistance with executive management and administrative, back-office support.

Unfortunately, Autism Services is faced with a dire financial situation. We began 2023 with a \$3 million deficit that threatened the future operation of its programs and services. When the situation became clear, our affiliation with People Inc. became singularly focused on maintaining services for all people served by Autism Services.

Despite aggressive and deliberate efforts to stabilize operations, a strategic assessment revealed these challenges have become too great to overcome alone. I am writing today to share some necessary changes that will ensure the continuation of Autism Services' programs with little or no disruption for you or your loved one living in our residences or participating in our programs.

With the guidance and support of the New York State Office of People with Developmental Disabilities ("OPWDD"), Autism Services and People Inc. have developed a thoughtful and organized strategy to maintain our exceptional programs.

I am pleased to announce that OPWDD has approved the transfer of all Autism Services' OPWDD programs to People Inc. beginning in early 2024. People Inc. has a long and respected history of providing person-centered services and supports to people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. We are grateful for OPWDD and People Inc.'s support and their shared desire to sustain services and programs and also continue the employment of our talented staff. With few exceptions, you or your loved one should expect no significant disruption to your daily routine.

Both Autism Services' and People Inc.'s leadership will work with and advocate for you or your loved one every step of this transition.

To learn more, and to have your questions answered, there will be a virtual forum at 6:45 pm on Monday, November 20, 2023. You can join with this link: <https://bit.ly/PeopleIncASIForum20>

Also, please feel free to email questions to ASQuestions@autism-services-inc.org or contact me at 716-817-7419. You can also call Dawn MacMurray, Senior Vice President at People, Inc. at 716-817-7496.

It is with great confidence and comfort that Autism Services will transfer its services to People Inc. We know you or your loved one will continue to thrive as we navigate this transition together.

Sincerely,

Thomas Ess
Executive Director

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Creating meaningful opportunities that enrich the lives of autistic people, their families, and their communities.