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July 7, 2020

Dear Hillside and Early On Families,

On June 30, Governor Whitmer announced the MI Safe Schools Roadmap for reopening schools. This roadmap will be exceptionally helpful as we make decisions regarding how we will keep our students and staff safe when we resume face to face instruction and intervention. While plans are still being developed, we wanted to update you on some of the things we now know.

According to Executive Order 2020-142 and the MI Safe Schools Roadmap for reopening schools, face to face instruction and intervention can resume in Phase 4 of Michigan’s Safe Start Plan with strict, and required, safety protocols in place. By August 17<sup>th</sup>, and prior to returning to face to face instruction or intervention, all schools, including Allegan Area ESA Specialized Instruction programs, must submit a Preparedness Plan to Michigan Department of Education for approval. In addition to outlining how we will meet the requirements detailed in the Roadmap for Phase 4, we must also develop and submit Preparedness Plans outlining how we will respond if our region were to shift back into Phases 1-3 or advance to Phase 5 or 6. Our Preparedness Plans will include information explaining how we will meet the needs of our students and families who are at increased risk due to existing medical conditions. No district is permitted to open for face to face instruction without an approved Preparedness Plan for each of the phases.

This means we will continue with remote learning for our programs scheduled for summer programming in early August including Hillside West, Hillside’s Young Adult Campus and Early On. We intend to resume face to face instruction and intervention on August 26<sup>th</sup> for Early On and August 31<sup>st</sup> for Hillside Main Campus and Hillside’s Young Adult Campus.

Since early June, Allegan Area ESA’s Specialized Instruction Leadership team has been busy planning for what our return to school will look like for the special populations served in our programs. Both Early On and Hillside, have established Return to School committees that are linked to the broader, county-wide, Return to School Task Force coordinated by Allegan Area Educational Service Agency. Our staff are working diligently to develop the Preparedness Plans mandated by Executive Order 2020-142 and required prior to our return to face to face instruction and intervention. We have also been working to obtain the personal protective equipment and sanitation products necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and keep our students, families and staff safe.

We recognize that this has been, and continues to be, a difficult time for all of our families. We continue to strive to partner effectively with you to support your child’s growth, development and achievement in a remote environment and look forward to the time when we can work with our students and families safely face to face. Please do not hesitate to reach out to myself or your program administrator - Ms. Lindsay Sichta for Early On and Ms. Amy Tomlinson for Hillside - with any thoughts, questions or concerns. We are in this together!

Sincerely,  
Rebecca L. Reed  
Director of Specialized Instruction