



Create - Ability, Inc.

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June 24, 2021

Dear Create-Ability, Inc. Staff,

This is a letter I never expected to have to write. While I have been the executive director of Create-Ability, Inc. for approximately 25 years, I have never been the public face of the agency. That was not necessary because you and innumerable other talented, committed and caring staff have represented us well for all these years. Our staff relationships in some cases have spanned decades and often have transcended the paid caregiver relationship that was the original connection. Consumers, families, guardians and funders have trusted us to provide respectful, thoughtful, and responsive care to people who need us to help them live healthy and meaningful lives in the community. We have done that well. We have made a difference. Lives are better because we have been here.

Unfortunately, there has been a confluence of events that have resulted in a difficult and painful decision. As you know, our income is solely based on the individual rates that each consumer is assigned to cover the cost of their support. We lost four consumers in 2020 and have not been successful in matching with referrals that could have replaced the lost revenue those individuals represent. Two of our consumers have opted to stay with their parents during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic so, although we are not receiving income for supporting them, we continue to hold a space for them in their homes with us. It seems that, while the COVID-19 pandemic was not the primary driver in our situation, it played a role in restricting the typical referral process. Many fewer people were interested in leaving their current providers so our options to get new referrals were significantly reduced despite our continued attempts. Equally difficult for us to overcome is the workforce shortage that exists in Dane County and elsewhere. Again, despite our best efforts, we were not able to recruit enough people to work for us in any position in the agency. We have extreme shortages of available staff in all capacities in the organization which has resulted in our need to pay *significant* amounts of overtime to the staff we have in place and in some cases, to contract with other agencies to work with our consumers. Our consumer rates do not account for that extra cost. We also incurred some significant costs during the pandemic shut down when consumers did not go out to work and we needed to provide daytime support coverage. Our funders did not opt to reimburse us fully or, in some cases, at all for those extra costs so we had to absorb them. This combination of circumstances has resulted in the extremely difficult decision to close Create-Ability, Inc. as of August 31, 2021. It is possible that some staff may be retained on a limited basis past that date while we finalize transitions. Please understand that we did not arrive at this decision quickly or easily or without seeking outside consultation on our ability to continue. We concluded that it was important to make this decision now so that we could carefully transition our consumers to new agencies and do what we can to ensure that staff who would like to do so continue to be part of their lives.

I know this is exceedingly difficult news to receive. I wanted to get it to you as soon as possible so that you did not hear it elsewhere. We are still working on many of the details and will

communicate them as we have them. One change we are making is a revision of our ETO policy. We understand that some people will chose to leave employment with us quickly, but we hope others will stay with us until the end to ease the transition for the people we support. Toward that end, we are changing our ETO policy such that any unused time will be paid out in full to staff who stay until we close or leave by mutual agreement. We hope people will minimize use of ETO to help us cover the schedule and keep consumers safe during this period of transition. The new policy is attached. We will also be presenting a retention bonus schedule in future communication with you.

Upon closure on August 31, 2021, all employer sponsored benefits will cease. We are attaching some information on benefits continuation and contact information for people who can answer your questions about how the change will apply to you.

During the period leading up to our closing, and as circumstances change, we will need to continue to communicate with you. Therefore, if your personal phone number, email or mailing address changes, please provide your current contact information to Holly Hiles-Kolberg at (608) 280-0206, ext. 227 or at hollyh@create-ability.org. If you secure alternative employment, we ask that you notify Holly immediately of your voluntary resignation.

I cannot fully express my appreciation for all the hard work and dedication that you have demonstrated over the years. This decision is painful, and I deeply regret the hardship it will place on you, our consumers, and all the families impacted. I sincerely wish there was an alternative but I am confident there is not a viable option at this time.

Please do not discuss this change with the individuals you support. A manager or a RSC will be contacting them to explain it to each person we serve.

If you have any questions or want additional information concerning this matter, please contact me or Sam Weyenberg at (608) 280-0206, ext. 219.

Sincerely,



Lori Mettel, PhD
Executive Director
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Exhibit A
Create-Ability, Inc. Employees by Job Title

Job Category/Title	Number of Employees
Residential Support Staff	48
Residential Support Coordinator	7
Accountant	1
Residential Program Director	1
Director of Quality Assurance	1
Director of Administrative & Business Services	1
Executive Director	1
Consultant	1