As you are all well aware, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has thrust the world into an unprecedented period of uncertainty. Safety measures aiming to limit the spread of the virus are changing the way that many organizations operate, including our Chapter of The ALS Association. Our first priority is the health and well-being of those living with ALS in our region, their caregivers, and our volunteers and staff. We are assessing the landscape daily and wanted to provide an update as to how this situation may impact our service delivery and community events in the near future.

Like many other businesses and nonprofits around the country, we have moved our staff to a remote working environment, and as such, are adjusting how we work. While our office isn't currently open to visitors, please know that you can always call our main line at (888)-672-0484 and either dial your party’s extension, or leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible. You can also email info@alsmn.org and expect a response within 24 hours. We are monitoring voicemail and email closely and will do our best to address your inquiries in a timely manner.

Below you will find a breakdown of our current plans for service delivery and upcoming events. These plans may change as CDC guidelines and the global pandemic response evolve. In addition to email communications like this one, we will be keeping our Facebook and Twitter channels updated with the most up-to-date information available.

**Chapter Services**

**Durable Medical Equipment Loan Pool**
We are working with our loan pool vendors to ensure additional procedures are in place regarding cleaning/disinfecting any equipment that is sent out, as well as implementing additional safety protocols for staff to follow. Know that during this time, we will be shipping as much equipment (as opposed to in-home delivery) as we can to minimize exposure. Kitchen equipment will no longer be accepted back into the program for reuse.

**Communication & Assistive Device Program**
Additional measures are in place to ensure equipment is thoroughly cleaned and staff are protected when equipment is returned. Voice banking/amplification equipment with external microphones will no longer be accepted back into the program for reuse. Equipment for Smart Home can still be delivered but installation through our 3rd party will be on hold until further notice.

**Family Respite Services**
After temporarily suspending Respite programming for the safety of all involved, the Chapter reopened this program effective Friday, May 1, 2020. While we recommend that families living with ALS limit visitors to their homes in every way possible during this time, including care providers, we recognize that for some, this is considered an essential service.

**Home Safety Program**
The Home Safety program will be on hold until further notice.
Family Assistance Program
The Family Assistance Program will be on hold until further notice. Both program volunteers and families utilizing the program will be contacted directly.

Support Groups
All support groups will be moved online through our Zoom platform until further notice. Emails will be sent to registered participants with instructions on how to access their support group. Click here for information on all support groups in our service area. Please contact us if you're interested in receiving more information about the groups sponsored by The ALS Association.

ALS Clinics
For the time being, ALS Association staff will not be attending ALS clinics but will be following up with attending families to ensure access to programs and services.

Chapter Events
Based on the CDC’s latest recommendation to not host events with more than 50 attendees for the next eight (8) weeks, we are currently working on modifications to our spring event schedule. As we finalize details for alternative courses of action, we will notify participants via email and through our social media platforms.

We are still actively fundraising for the Mankato Walk to Defeat ALS, The ALS SuperHero Dash, and the Bismarck Walk to Defeat ALS events to support the programs and services of the Chapter. During times like these, we want to ensure we have the resources in place to meet the needs of the ALS community. You can help by fundraising or contributing to any of these events, or by making a general donation to our mission.

Volunteers
We are an organization that depends heavily on the generosity and support of volunteers across our service area. Because we are strictly limiting face-to-face contact for the foreseeable future, volunteer needs will shift dramatically over the next few months. If you volunteer with an individual or family living with ALS, or in our offices in St. Paul, expect to hear from us very soon on next steps. If you are planning to volunteer at one of our spring events, you’ll be receiving an email in the next week with an update on our developing plans.

Now, more than ever, we must come together and do what is best for the health and safety of our communities and the larger world around us. We urge you to adhere to the CDC’s best practices in preventing further spread of COVID-19, and to consider the impact your actions might have on those currently living with ALS. Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hjelle
Executive Director
The ALS Association MN/ND/SD Chapter