

Dear Colleagues,

How many times this year did you think “will 2020 ever end?” Well, this excruciating year is coming to an end in just ten days! While we will need to continue to use all our coping skills and resources to continue persevering with the COVID 19 pandemic into 2021, there is something refreshing to me in believing that this is a significant milestone.

As we wind down 2020 I have my most urgent request of the year for you. **Will you please pledge to make a sacrifice over these next ten days to limit your out-of-work contacts to your immediate household?**

We talked about this extensively before the Thanksgiving holiday and yet we still experienced a spike in employees and clients testing positive in the weeks since. In Tennessee, only six percent of ICU beds are unoccupied today and the largest surge to date is underway. In Kentucky, nearly 25,000 new Covid cases were reported in the week after Thanksgiving Day alone. By now each of us knows someone directly who has experienced the personal impact of COVID 19. It is truly frightening how pervasively the virus has dominated our nation and region.

So, as you can imagine, I am extremely worried about our clients -- and each of you -- as we head into the coldest months of the year with the virus surging and many states setting records for daily infections. The ONLY way to reduce this risk is to make a pledge to avoid contacts with anyone outside your immediate household for the next 10-14 days. I know this is a painful sacrifice, but not nearly as painful as seeing our loved ones suffer.

Thankfully, an end to this pandemic is in sight with two vaccines now being released in the U.S. We have requested that our front line workers be considered in the tier two distribution plan and will let you know as soon as we learn our status.

We are also still developing our VOA policy regarding the vaccine. I have studied the comments from our last D2 call and feel confident we are moving in the most prudent and appropriate direction to keep our clients and colleagues safe. We will continue to maintain an active dialogue and I look forward to continuing this important discussion after the first of the year.

As you may know, our organization will soon turn 125 years old! We wouldn't still be here, thriving and caring for more than 25,000 people each year, if it weren't for the dedication and commitment of each of you and those who came before you. This may be the greatest call to action of our lifetime. I am grateful to be on this journey with you – a dedicated VOA family who put others before themselves.

On behalf of our senior team, I am wishing you a restful, peaceful and HEALTHY holiday season. [I will leave you with this editorial I was inspired to write because of the truly special mission that is Volunteers of America and how touched I was to see gratitude in action.](#)

Thank you and happy holidays.

Jennifer Hancock, LCSW | President & CEO
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