Tahirih Justice Center
Operational Guidance

As a precautionary measure and out of an abundance of caution due to COVID-19, the Tahirih Justice Center has begun operating remotely effective Monday, March 16 and effective Monday, March 30 we will physically close our offices until further notice. This guidance is intended to provide detail on how we will operationalize mandatory telework on a day-to-day basis. The duration of our mandatory virtual work environment will continue through June 30, 2020 basis in response to CDC and local government guidance on the spread and impact of COVID-19. We will notify all staff regularly and routinely via the COVID-19 Central All Staff Channel of any change in our operational status.

During the period of virtual working, Michele, Christine H., Cristina and Christine D. are available to guide, answer questions, and provide support as we all work together to maintain our operational services. Please reach out to them at michelep@tahirih.org (cell: 773-354-4828); christineh1@tahirih.org (cell: 215-901-7028); cristinaf@tahirih.org (cell: 703-690-4920). christined@tahirih.org (cell: 856-981-6698).

- Leadership team will continue to convene weekly (Tuesdays) to escalate issues of concern from staff and to ensure that we are resolving any questions and addressing any problems as they arise. These meeting will also include sharing reports of state of emergencies designated by localities, school closures and any other local information worth sharing for common understanding of what’s happening on the ground in Tahirih offices. All Staff Q&A sessions will also be held weekly (Thursdays) to announce any updates or share any emergent critical information (such as extensions to the mandatory telework period), as well as provide staff with opportunity to ask questions and seek guidance. Additionally, more details on health insurance, benefits as well as other related guidance will be shared routinely.

- Staff are expected to check the following Microsoft Teams and Channels for updates at least once each workday to ensure they are up to date on breaking developments relevant to Tahirih procedures:
  - COVID-19 Central, All Staff Channel
  - COVID-19 Central, IT Channel
  - Any local channels as directed by their ED and/or supervisors

- We want to reassure all staff that operations will continue to work business as usual. There will be no interruption in payroll processing, reimbursements or any other payments to third party vendors during this period. Supervisors should approve reimbursement expense reports in Paylocity the same day for staff to minimize financial impact on staff members. There are many systems that we use that are fully available in a remote work environment and we have no expectation that we will experience any interruption in service. These systems are accessible outside of our VPN and we will monitor availability closely: Paylocity, Anybill, LegalServer/TIO, CRM, and BlueJeans. Given extraordinary usage on virtual meetings and your individual internet service provider, please be aware that these systems may take longer to load than usual.
• If you do not have internet in your remote workspace, please contact Cristina Fernandez for additional guidance. Cristina will coordinate approval of your use of a cell phone hotspot and the process for reimbursement.

• Work with your office administrator and Cerium to install SoftPhone to ensure that calls to your office extension are re-routed to your laptop. Outgoing calls from SoftPhone will show your office number. Please use SoftPhone or a designated Tahirih work cell phone rather than your personal cell phone or externally hosted services like Google Voice when conducting Tahirih work to ensure confidentiality. Because the SoftPhone service is available to all employees, costs accrued for personal cell phone usage will not be reimbursed.

  o Additionally, change your voicemail greeting to communicate the virtual office environment particularly during the fluid COVID-19 pandemic. Include that you are working off-site, and regularly checking messages. Please note, any SoftPhone calls that go unanswered will be automatically redirected to your work voicemail, and an email to your Tahirih email address will be generated with a copy of the voicemail recording. To change the voicemail greeting on SoftPhone, users would follow the same procedure as on their desk phone: *1 for access to voicemail, enter password (extension plus a zero if the user has not changed it) then press 0 to change voicemail message.

• For services or tools not previously identified, an established a pool of funds is available for each office not to exceed $500. Please contact Christine D’Amato for additional guidance and approval prior to making purchases.

• Each local office should designate an individual to take their office PEX cards home to address emergent purchase needs. It is unacceptable for credit card information to be emailed to staff, and the person executing the payment should provide card details verbally over the phone. The cards should continue to be used for the types of expenditures that are normal and routine. If you have any question, please contact Christine D’Amato.

• Cerium helpdesk should be contacted via an email at support@ceriumtech.com (“Cerium Support”) or at 571-814-3573. Please also copy Cristina Fernandez on any email sent to Cerium Support so that we can track your issue to resolution.

**Office Protocols**

Employees are strongly discouraged from accessing Tahirih spaces without expressed consent from your Executive Director and/or Chief Officer. Please also reference the *Client Services Continuity Plan* (as applicable) to determine when it becomes essential to visit the office. Further, if a visit to the office is unavoidable, employees must coordinate their visit with the Executive Director and/or Chief Officer to ensure that we minimize staff contact to the greatest extent possible in order to lessen the impact of the spread of the virus.
Use of Outlook Calendars for coverage and availability will be essential to determine staff’s working hours. In your signature, it may be a good idea to add language around virtual work, such as: “Due to current public health concerns regarding COVID-19, I am working in a virtual workplace setting from [YOUR WORK HOURS]. I am monitoring my e-mails and voicemails and will return messages as promptly as possible.” To the extent you reasonably can, indicate your work hours, particularly when flexing hours to accommodate personal circumstances during the virtual workplace period.

All staff must update Paylocity with emergency contact information, as these will be used to develop local office and national coordination of “phone trees”. Once established, Tahirih will conduct a one time agency-wide test of phone tree to ensure that we are capable of contacting all staff in a timely fashion. Office management essential functions should be coordinated by the Executive Director and Chief Officers. The activities to be considered in managing virtually (or onsite as determined by leadership) include the following:

**Mail** should be forwarded to one employee’s home, OR not more than one designated employee should visit the office to manage mail. Mail will be sorted and scanned electronically via email to its intended recipients. Checks should be collected and stored in a safe or lock box so that the appropriate individual can deposit. While we normally require daily deposits, we ask you to ensure deposits are made at a minimum twice weekly.

If you need to send out mail, please use USPS or Federal Express. **Tahirih’s Federal Express account number is 322680627** and should be listed on the envelope for appropriate billing. If you use USPS, please submit your receipts for reimbursement through Paylocity.

Sending out first class and certified mail virtually through a secure online portal with Neopost is also being coordinated. Cristina Fernandez will announce more details soon.

**Computers** Please be aware that Microsoft Office suite of products do not require login via VPN access, and you are highly encouraged to use OneDrive and Team sites during this period. Cerium is monitoring our VPN to reduce the stress on the system as a whole. Overall, we ask that employees use the VPN *as needed* to gain access to shared files on the Z drive, but please do not stay connected when it is not necessary. This is particularly helpful in order to reduce the burden on our systems as they receive higher than normal use. As a reminder, to log on to the VPN, click on the Watchguard icon on your desktop. You will be directed to the login page. Enter your login credentials. To disconnect from the VPN, users need only click on the up arrow at the bottom right of the screen to reveal the hidden icons. While connected, the Watchguard icon will be green. Right click on it to disconnect.

To the extent that you are able to print from home, you are permitted to take paper from the Tahirih office to use at home. Tahirih will reimburse for additional out of pocket expenses related to necessary at home printing such as additional ink cartridges.

Staff can check out any equipment or supplies they find necessary to complete their work from home including your mouse, keyboard, and monitors. In order to keep track of IT equipment, we will issue item control receipts to individuals who request such equipment. If you have any questions on this requirement, please contact Cristina Fernandez.
Employee Benefits

If you have questions about benefit coverages or accessing care, you can contact our broker Jen Coppola at jcoppola@ldbinsurance.com. She is our employees’ advocate in negotiating care and will intervene on our behalf with CareFirst, vision and dental providers. Please be sure to copy Christine H. and Samira on all communication to Jen. The following provides you additional details on specific benefits available to you:

CareFirst Health Insurance Coverage

CareFirst has put in place additional measures to prevent barriers to care that our employees may face. The following provides additional action that CareFirst has committed to take:

- Waive prior authorizations for diagnostic tests and for covered services that are medically necessary and consistent with CDC guidance for any members that are diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Cover medically necessary diagnostic tests that are consistent with CDC guidance related to COVID-19, at no cost share to its members.
- Increase access to prescription medications by waiving early medication refill limits on 30-day prescription maintenance medications.

CareFirst encourages members to seek alternative sites of care if their primary care provider is not available, such as CareFirst’s 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line or CareFirst Video Visit, to ensure access to health services, avoid potential risks of infection and ease the burden of emergency room personnel. For telemedicine accessed through a CareFirst Video Visit, copays, coinsurance, and deductibles will be waived for the duration of this public health emergency—including behavioral health, lactation support, nutrition counseling and urgent care services.

These benefits can be accessed via the online portal https://carefirstvideovisit.com/landing.htm or through downloading an app on your phone.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – All benefit eligible employees have access to Tahirih’s EAP. The EAP provides 24/7 free and confidential services including support from a mental health professional. They can be reached at 1-800-450-1327 and you can visit their website at magellanhealth.com/member.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) – Employees who face illness or personal circumstances which result in their inability to work may be eligible for FMLA. Additionally, the recently passed Families First Coronavirus Response Act provides employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. Under this Act, employees may be eligible for two weeks of paid sick time (consistent with our Self-Managed PTO Policy) for specified reasons related to COVID-19. Employees employed for at least 30 days are eligible for up to an additional 10 weeks of paid family leave to care for a child under certain circumstances related to COVID-19. This expansion of sick leave and FMLA takes effect April 1, 2020. We will provide all employees a detailed policy update once
the US Department of Labor has released additional guidance. You can also find additional information [here](#).

**Exceptions to current Tahirih Employee Handbook Protocols**

### Flexible Work Schedules

Tahirih continues to provide flexible work schedules in accordance with our policy. We encourage employees to work with their teams to create a schedule that meet team needs while allowing individuals to take care of themselves and their families. Per the [Tahirih Employee Handbook](#) (pp.46-50), our flexible work schedules include staggered work start/end times (“peak-hour”), full time work on a modified schedule (“compressed work week”), and telecommuting multiple days a week or even 100% remotely. Generally, these accommodations require supervisory approval, a formal established agreement in advance and the requirement that operational needs will not be adversely affected as a result of employees’ use of these flexibilities. Because of COVID-19, we are waiving these eligibility criteria for employees to feel fully empowered to make the best decisions for them and their families. We are advising all supervisors to approve all requests from employees to use any and/or all of these workplace flexibilities, and we ask that employees coordinate directly with their supervisors so that supervisors are aware and can appropriately manage the workload.

### Self-managed Paid Time Off (PTO)

Per the [Tahirih Employee Handbook](#) (p. 29), employees have the flexibility to take time off as needed. It also indicates that PTO must be approved by their supervisors, scheduled two weeks in advance for more than 2 consecutive business days and planned with consideration for team goals and office coverage. Additionally, the policy requires that unscheduled PTO of more than 4 days for a personal medical need requires a doctor’s note to their supervisor. Given the impact of COVID-19 on local health systems as well as news of closures of local school systems and universities, we are waiving these requirements. The following examples are intended to provide you as examples of the types of situations that may arise for which PTO can be used:

- A daycare/school system closes temporarily or for an extended period of time. An employee who has school aged children will alert their supervisor that they will develop flexible work schedules that will utilize a combination of paid time off and will work intermittently. This flexibility is intended to ensure that mission-essential work can be completed and that children receive the appropriate supervision as required.
- An employee falls sick and contacts their supervisor to alert them that they are taking unscheduled PTO. They are unsure if they are sick with COVID-19 but are taking steps to isolate themselves. The supervisor advises the employee to remain home until they are well and that they will perform intermittent work as they are able. No doctor’s note will be required consistent with guidance from the CDC, however, if the employee believes they may be sick with COVID-19, they should seek medical care.
Hiring and New Employee Onboarding

We will maintain our current processes for interviewing using BlueJeans or phone. We may place on hold or intentionally delay the hiring of some positions due to both operational and financial constraints. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis and hiring managers should consult with their supervisors, Chief Officers and Christine Hakizimana for more information and to discuss next steps.

Interns

At this time, we are regrettably deferring our planned paid summer internship program. Given our ongoing mandatory telework environment, the amount of supervision required to oversee interns, and financial constraints given the current fiscal outlook, we will not expand our internship program as initially planned. Christine Hakizimana is working with each team to determine next steps regarding internship hiring that has already been completed or in process.

For spring interns currently onboard with Tahirih, they should continue to work remotely as they are able and consistent with guidance issued by their sponsoring schools. As interns have access to Microsoft Office and One Drive and can access these on a personal computer, they may be able to continue to support programmatic and operational duties. Please note that interns may be unable to complete their internship or need to change the structure of their internships due to changes at their universities. Many universities have ended their spring semesters and students have returned to an online-learning environment. It goes without saying that interns, in particular, will require close supervision and support during this time.