

New director for LI nonprofit

BY VICTOR OCASIO

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A new executive director has taken over Bethpage-based Adults and Children with Learning and Developmental Disabilities as the organization faces new challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Robert Ciatto replaces Robert C. Goldsmith, who retired from the post at the end of December. The nonprofit organization has 1,300 employees and offers services to more than 1,300 individuals with disabilities in Nassau and Suffolk counties.

Ciatto, who joined the organization in 2014 as assistant executive director, has 27 years of experience working with people with development disabilities, and he spent more than 20 years with AHRC Nassau.

Ciatto said ACLD this year is facing cuts in state Medicaid funding, which covers 95% of the organization's budget, the loss of revenue from adult day programs that were put on pause last year to safeguard against COVID-19, and the increased costs from PPE for employees and residents of the organization's nearly 50 group homes.

Ciatto said the organization is working to cut costs. But, he said, "Our core mission is to provide quality services that ensure the health, safety and welfare of the people we support."

He added, "We have never wavered on that mission, regardless of pandemic or regardless of budget cuts."

Since joining the organization, Ciatto, 49, has overseen ACLD's expansion from 29 group homes



Robert Ciatto, 49, is the new executive director of Adults and Children with Learning and Developmental Disabilities.

to nearly 50, which house more than 400 people. He said the organization has plans to continue developing more housing this year.

ACLD is currently working on a 5,000-square-foot center in Deer Park for adults with autism, which is expected to open in April or May. The center will offer a media room aimed at enhancing social skills in the digital landscape as well as a kitchen for development of vocational cooking skills, Ciatto said.

"This has been in process for about a year, but obviously the pandemic has halted a lot of the development of the space," he said.

Ciatto is a "dynamic and visionary leader," Joseph J. Ortego, president of the ACLD Board of Trustees, said in a statement. "His decades of experience and personal commitment to protecting the health and bettering the lives of those who are part of the ACLD family makes him the right person at the right time to lead the organization."