



Mental Health and Recovery Services Board

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 impact on behavioral health clients

I received multiple calls in the recent weeks from various community members asking how COVID-19 has impacted our local behavioral health system. Individuals wanted to know if we are experiencing an increased need in treatment services, if we are seeing an increase in suicide deaths, and if more individuals are overdosing during the time of this pandemic. The concern here is too complex to be able to provide a simple answer. We have implemented telehealth services to ensure availability of services during the social distancing orders. We are seeing slightly reduced numbers of individuals receiving in-person treatment services and a slight reduction in new admissions for outpatient treatment services. Does this mean that we have less of a need for behavioral health treatment and support?

Earlier today, I was contacted by one of our Board members who is very passionate about advocating for individuals struggling with mental illness and addictions. During our conversation, we exchanged our thoughts regarding the impact of social distancing orders and isolation for individuals in early recovery and for those suffering from severe and persistent mental illness. Without doubt, we need to understand that some individuals are not doing well without their daily routine, which included in-person support groups, case management services, therapy, and other social support services. Maintaining employment was also a healthy routine for many individuals in early recovery. Many of these healthy routines were lost during COVID-19 social distancing orders. Thus, we are experiencing an increased rate of alcohol and drug relapses and suicide attempts.

I am writing this press release to alert our community members of the importance of assisting and checking on friends and family members experiencing difficulties in managing their well-being during this time. Unfortunately, even for me personally, many public opinions through the internet are so exorbitant that they are creating a turbulent environment. Extreme opinions related to COVID-19, many of which are not backed up by any facts, can create fear, anxiety, and depression. Our advice is to be compassionate during these difficult times. Care for your friend and neighbor. Support individuals in their recovery process. And express your opinion in a thoughtful way to others.

For local resources or guidance navigating the behavioral health system, please contact our Board office at 419-448-0640.

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