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## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions

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In light of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and guidelines for isolation and avoiding groups, you likely have many questions about how to access behavioral health services. Disability Rights Ohio created this document to answer some of the most pressing questions you might have about your own care or the care of a loved one. DRO makes every effort to keep resources current as regulations and guidelines are revised. If you have specific questions or concerns about your behavioral health care, please call our intake department at 614-466-7264, press 2, then leave a voicemail. We will return your call.

### **What should I do if I am experiencing a mental health crisis and/or need to be connected to mental health services for the first time?**

These can be challenging and uncertain times. Everyone is affected by this crisis and for most of us it is difficult to know how to cope with constantly changing circumstances. If you are experiencing an immediate mental health crisis, there are options available to you to get assistance without leaving your house.

#### **If you have thoughts of suicide, you can:**

- **Call** 911
- **Call** the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255
- **Text** the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor

There are many online resources for both group and one-on-one support. If you would like more information about online support groups, visit [www.supportgroupscentral.com](http://www.supportgroupscentral.com). For a comprehensive list of different online supports, visit [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

It is possible that your local behavioral health agency is still providing in-person treatment options. Contact them directly. You may also contact your local [mental health, alcohol, drug and recovery services board](#) to find out more



information to be connected to services for the first time.

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) now has a toll-free Careline to provide emotional support for Ohioans who are experiencing stress, anxiety, fear, sadness and loneliness amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Call 1-800-720-9616 to connect with trained counselors for 24/7 support. The Careline is staffed by credentialed counselors who have been trained to provide free, confidential support for a wide range of needs, including mental health concerns, substance use, problem gambling, and more.

### **What if I was receiving mental health, counseling, or substance use treatment services in-person before the COVID-19 pandemic?**

The first step is to call your mental health provider to ask what services they are continuing to provide. It is possible that your provider has made teletherapy/telehealth available. Some agencies may be providing services over the phone or through video calls. In addition, there are a number of online services and support groups that your community provider is able to provide to you or your love one with during this time.

Governor DeWine has worked with the Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage & Family Therapist. Board to provide more flexibility to providers using telehealth. Teletherapy rule can be found in the OAC 4157-3-15.

### **What can I do if I am seeking opioid treatment for the first time?**

It is possible that your primary care physician or another on-going healthcare provider is able to refer you to treatment. If you do not have a primary care physician or another on-going healthcare provider, you can seek help at a local crisis treatment center. Given the current risks of face-to-face interaction, it is advisable to call ahead to see if your local crisis treatment center is allowing walk-in care.

If you live in Franklin County, Columbus Public Health has worked with community providers to create a comprehensive tool for navigating every aspect of treatment and recovery, including Crisis Intervention, Naloxone Access, Recovery Housing, Support Groups, Treatment Services and more. You can access this document here: <https://myfcph.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/OpiateResourcesBooklet.pdf>

If you live in Cuyahoga County, Metro health and Recovery Resources have created a 2019| Refer to Behavioral Health Care document. You can access the document here: <https://www.recres.org/ManagedFiles/2019%20Refer%20to%20Care%20Guide.pdf>

It is possible that your local community has also provided a resource guide. Check with your local [mental health, alcohol, drug and recovery services board](#) to see if

they can provide you with one.

Many local communities have a local 2-1-1 number that is intended to help connect community members with thousands of social service, government, and community resources. In Franklin County, individuals may Call 2-1-1 or visit <http://www.211centralohio.org>.

### **What if I was previously receiving medication for opioid addiction treatment?**

You may qualify for Take-Home medications. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has provided provisional changes to existing policies about Take-Home medications. Exceptions for Take-Home medications may be granted for stable patients in an OTP (Opioid Treatment Program)/Medication-Assisted Treatment Program (MAT) to receive 28 days of doses. Exceptions for Take-Home medications will be granted for up to 14 days for patients who are less stable/newer in recovery but who the OTP believes can safely handle this level of Take-Home medication. See the SAMHSA website with more detailed information [here](#).

### **What can I do if I want to visit my loved one in a state psychiatric facility or other treatment facility during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) restricted outside visitation to prevent COVID-19 spread to individuals and staff in psychiatric facilities. According to the latest visitation protocol—effective as of March 1, 2021—state psychiatric hospitals now allow onsite visitation to patients who are not in quarantine or medical isolation. However, all visitors still must follow specific COVID-19 precautions to reduce potential spread of the virus. For more information on these precautions and visitation at this time, you can [read OhioMHAS's statement](#) on visitation protocol.

### **How can I best manage COVID-19-related stress? And how can I manage the challenges of isolation?**

Know that you are not alone. Everyone is experiencing some level of stress as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. We are in this together. Different strategies work for different people, so consider strategies that have worked in the past for you. Language is so very important. Try using the term physical distancing instead of isolation/isolating.

- Consider simple things to break up the day:

- Go on a walk break
- Take whatever time you can to sit and meditate
- Try a favorite or new relaxation activity
- Take some time to write down your feelings. (Journaling about your feelings can help you work through any stress or anxiety you may be experiencing.)
- Try setting a schedule for yourself
- Set a time to eat 3 meals per day
- Turn off the television, set down the paper, disconnect from social media for a few hours
- Make sure to get out of your sleep clothes and into fresh clothing
- Make sure to take a shower
- Give yourself time to take a break and reset

If you are having a difficult time with social distancing, consider using technology to keep in touch with friends and family. There are many platforms and applications that are free to connect (Zoom, FacebookMessenger, WhatsApp, FaceTime, and Skype).

If you are unable to access technology or other resources, consider what you can do to stay busy in your home; learn a new skill, a new recipe or craft. Try something new every day.

Additionally, Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services has created a video which outlines mental health and safety tips that you may find helpful: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTmJac\\_eTf8&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTmJac_eTf8&feature=youtu.be).

### **What can I do to help my loved ones manage COVID-19 stress?**

The best way to help your loved ones through this time is by staying informed. Going to credible sources such as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or the [World Health Organization](#) to learn the best practices to teach your loved ones about the COVID-19.

It is important to model and talk about good hygiene skills with your loved ones such as washing your hands often and covering your cough. To help you and your family manage stress during this time, you can engage in activities to help reduce stress. You can take this time to teach your loved ones about self-care by utilizing relaxation methods like yoga, reading, or finding mindfulness activities online. You can spend time together by playing board games, going on an indoor scavenger hunt, or learning a new hobby.

### **Where can I find online 12 step meetings/support?**

You may be worried because typical supports that you had in place are not currently able to meet in-person. The good news is that there are alternative

options for attending 12 step meetings:

- For Alcohol Anonymous virtual meetings, visit AA Intergroup, AA Central Ohio online, or call Alcoholics Anonymous Central Ohio at 614-253-8501.
- For Narcotics Anonymous virtual meetings, visit NA Central Ohio, NA by phone or Virtual NA online or you can also contact Narcotics Anonymous Central Ohio helpline at 614-252-1700

### **What support groups are available to me, and how can I access these groups?**

If you are looking for support communities and are comfortable accessing those resources online, you may contact your local community behavioral health provider, local ADAMH (Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health) Board, local mental health crisis center, or local NAMI chapter to help select the best support group for you.

### **What can I do if I am currently quarantined and need support?**

If you are interested in finding support, there are online resources and hotlines to assist you through this time. You can access phone support by going to NAMI's "Warmline." Online support communities that you can access are:

- SupportGroups.com: <https://online.supportgroups.com/> Website featuring 200+ online support groups
- For Like Minds: [www.forlikeminds.com](http://www.forlikeminds.com) Online mental health support network that allows for individuals to connect with others who are living with or supporting someone with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and stressful life events
- 18percent: [www.18percent.org](http://www.18percent.org) Offers a free, peer-to-peer online support community for those struggling with a wide range of mental health issues
- Psych Central: [www.psychcentral.com](http://www.psychcentral.com) Offers online mental health resources, quizzes, news, an "Ask the Therapist" function, and online support communities
- The [American Psychological Association](http://www.apa.org) also offers a step by step guide on their website about building and enhancing resiliency during this time.

### **OTHER RESOURCES**

- [CDC Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#)
- [The Jed Foundation Tips for Self-Care and Managing Stress](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

**(SAMHSA) Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health: Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation During an Infectious Disease Outbreak**

- **SAMHSA Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks**
- **The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (English, Spanish, and Chinese versions available).**
- **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Talking to Children About Coronavirus**
- **Alcohol Use Disorder Fact Sheet**
- **Get Alcohol Use Disorder Treatment**
- **Alcoholics Anonymous Online Meetings**
- **CDC- Managing Stress and Anxiety**
- **COVID-19 and Anxiety**
- **Disaster Distress Helpline**
- **Disaster Distress Helpline - Chinese**
- **Health Alert Network** *CDC's primary method of sharing cleared information about urgent public health incidents with public information officers; federal, state, territorial, and local public health practitioners; clinicians; and public health laboratories*
- **Helping Homebound Children**
- **Managing Coronavirus-related Stress**
- **Managing Fears and Anxiety Around Coronavirus**
- **Mental Health Crisis Care**
- **Mental Health Considerations**
- **National Institute of Mental Health - Coping with Coronavirus Stress**
- **Parent/Caregiver Guide to Coping**
- **Supporting Yourself**
- **Talking to Children about Coronavirus**
- **Wallet Card for Coping with Disaster**
- **Wexner Medical Center - How to Talk to Your Children About Coronavirus**
- **Tips for Social Distancing**
- **Taking Care of Your Family**

**Unemployment Information**

If you are interested in receiving counseling at this time, teletherapy is available. To find teletherapy services near you, please contact your insurance company to discuss your counseling options.

### **How can I help others and my community?**

Consider ways to donate your time:

- Contact your local Crisis Center or Suicide Hotline
- Make a donation to your local mental health agencies, food banks, or homeless shelters to help assist others with getting resources
- Check in on your family, friends and neighbors
- Run errands, get groceries or pick up prescriptions for others if you are able
- Stay socially connected through phone, text, or email