



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM E. DELPHIN-RITTMON, Ph.D.
COMMISSIONER

MEMORANDUM

To: DMHAS Private Non-Profit Providers
From: Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D.
Date: March 27, 2020
Subject: DMHAS COVID-19 Provider Update #7

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to evolve around the world and in our own state, our delivery of services continues to change with it. In an effort to continue to provide clients with vital treatment and services while practicing social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has issued guidance on Enhanced Care Clinics (ECCs) and synchronized telemedicine for specified behavioral health group therapy services.

[Enhanced Care Clinic \(ECC\) Access Requirements](#)

DSS is temporarily suspending Enhanced Care Clinic (ECC) access requirements. In order to address service delivery concerns of ECCs due to the coronavirus emergency, DSS will be:

1. Expecting ECCs to respond to clinical emergencies as they arise within available resources, however, the time requirements for urgent or emergent cases will not be enforced;
2. Allowing clinics to temporarily merge sites to consolidate staff due to staffing shortages caused by the coronavirus;
3. Suspending all Mystery Shopper calls; and
4. Waiving the requirement for extended operating hours allowing providers to shorten operating hours.

Please submit your required contingency plans to your assigned Regional Network Manager at Beacon Health Options.

[Expanded Use of Synchronized Telemedicine for Specified Behavioral Health Group Therapy Services and Autism Spectrum Disorder Services](#)

DSS is temporarily expanding telemedicine to cover specified group therapy services and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) services. The following group therapy and ASD services will be permissible to be rendered via synchronized telemedicine, which is defined as an audio and video

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telecommunication system with real-time communication between the patient and practitioner. These services cannot be rendered using audio-only (telephone).

The following Behavioral Health (BH) services may be rendered via synchronized telemedicine:

Procedure Code	Description
90853	Group Therapy
90849	Multi-family Group Psychotherapy
S9480	Intensive Outpatient Program - Psychiatric
H0015	Intensive Outpatient Program – Chemical Dependency
H0035	Partial Hospitalization Program
H2013	Adult Day Treatment

Provider Self-Care

During this unprecedented time, please do not forget self-care to prevent [compassion fatigue](#). The COVID-19 pandemic is greatly impacting the overall health, wellness and hope of all of us, and it is especially concerning because international studies, and our own CT data, indicate suicide attempts and deaths [increase in the spring](#). This pandemic is enhancing all of the risk factors associated with poor mental health and suicide risk: increased anxiety and depression, uncertainty, isolation, financial burden, family and relationship discord, limited access to basic needs and healthcare, and increased access to lethal means and substances that may reduce inhibitions.

Now more than ever before, it is *vital* that providers be *vigilant* in using *virtual telehealth resources and free, accessible, evidence-based, best practice tools* to assist them in assessing individuals' levels of risk, determining imminent risk, and referring them to appropriate levels of care, while supporting people to stay safe at home and find creative ways of connecting with others to [reduce isolation](#). The [Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale \(C-SSRS\)](#) and [Safety Plan](#), including [Counseling Access to Lethal Means \(CALM\)](#), are tools recommended by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's Zero Suicide (ZS) Approach, and meet the Joint Commission NPSG.15.01.01, and CARF requirements. Conveniently, they are also posted on the [DMHAS Office of Workforce Development \(OWD\) Free Suicide Prevention Web-based Training Resources \(C-SSRS, CALM links\)](#). Note, both the C-SSRS and Safety Plan also have apps for Android and iPhone use.

Please see the attached Telehealth Tips from [Dr. Barbara Stanley](#) (Safety Plan), and these from [Dr. David Jobes](#) (CAMS): <https://cams-care.com/resources/educational-content/cams-telepsychology/> that were shared with the national ZS list serve today. Feel free to contact them directly if you have questions. They are very happy to help.

Your flexibility in adjusting the way you deliver services to the people you serve is very much appreciated. We know that this time of change and uncertainty can be challenging, yet you have all done a tremendous job in taking it in stride and continuing to provide important treatment and services to the people you serve. Please take care of yourselves and each other.