



PRESS RELEASE

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Behavioral Health Organizations Vow To Continue to Serve Rhode Islanders in Need

Thank State for Support To Meet Need During COVID-19 Pandemic

East Providence – The five behavioral health organizations that make up Horizon Healthcare Partners (HHP) vow to continue to serve all Rhode Islanders in need of mental health and substance use disorders during the COVID-19 crisis/pandemic.

Community Care Alliance, Newport Mental Health, Thrive Behavioral Health, Tides Family Services and CODAC are the five behavioral health and substance use organizations that comprise HHP. In the midst of COVID19 directives to implement social distancing protocols, HHP agencies will remain open due to the essential behavioral health services they provide to individuals and families that are most vulnerable in local communities across the state. Several of the HHP agencies are also working with state officials to implement telehealth consultations for therapy sessions via audio or video communication.

Frank Shea, Interim CEO of HHP, stated, “We want to first thank Governor Raimondo and Department of Health Director Dr. Alexander-Scott for the amazing job they are doing to manage the COVID-19 public health crisis/pandemic in Rhode Island. Additionally, we thank Director Power of BHDDH for ensuring that the behavioral health needs are also being addressed during this time. Second, all the HHP agencies want to restate our unequivocal commitment to continue to serve all Rhode Islanders in need of behavioral health services during this crisis.”

Benedict F. Lessing, Jr., President/CEO said, “Community Care Alliance (CCA) continues to be open for business while adapting our operations to the pandemic. As a community-based safety net social services and behavioral health organization we serve many individuals and families with multiple complex needs including homelessness, mental illness, addiction, child abuse and neglect, food insufficiency, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, developmental delays and domestic violence to name a few. Throughout this time, our challenge will be to consistently and continuously engage the populations we serve with the utmost safety. How to access services and any

programmatic changes to accommodate safety can be found on our website www.CommunityCareRI.org.”

In order to best serve Rhode Islanders struggling with behavioral health issues in local communities, HHP members are asking for continued assistance from the state to ensure that:

1. **HHP members receive priority for personal protective equipment (PPE)** for staff and patients (i.e. high-risk groups such as group home residents).
2. **HHP members receive priority testing like other frontline healthcare providers.** If, and when, there are presumptive symptoms with patients and staff, HHP organizations will need the same prioritization for testing to protect their frontline healthcare staff to maintain essential services.
3. **HHP members receive emergency payment relief to maintain operations.** HHP organizations have limited or no financial reserves and their business continuity forecast does not allow them to continue to pay staff during this emergency with it's increased demands for services and shortage of available (not quarantined at home) staff. HHP agencies have already been asked to address community needs, including assisting people that are homeless and providing behavioral health support to other community groups. These services are largely not reimbursed.

HHP also encourages Rhode Islanders to turn to BH Link for behavioral health crises during this time. BH Link is run by HHP member organization, Community Care Alliance and is the state's 24/7 facility for Rhode Islanders experiencing behavioral health crises, including substance use disorder, and for the families and friends of those individuals struggling to find help. In addition to the emergency triage center located at 975 Waterman Avenue in East Providence, BH Link runs a 24/7 hour hotline/helpline at **401-414-LINK (5465)**.

“Newport Mental Health remains a frontline provider. We need everyone to know we're open. We just ask that they call first, and by all means, if you're feeling unsafe or suicidal, reach out to us, anytime. Our number is 401-846-1213 both for emergency and non-emergency situations,” added Jamie Lehane, CEO and President of Newport Mental Health.

“CODAC Behavioral Healthcare is continuing all of its hours of operation,” stated Linda Hurley, President and CEO of CODAC Behavioral Healthcare. “We are continuing to provide regularly scheduled services; intervention and crisis services as well as treatment and support services in all of the communities we serve. While we are modifying certain operations to assure the lowest risk of exposure possible, please go to our website or Facebook page for contact information. Please call the following numbers with any questions; medication services hotline (401-490-0716) and counseling services (401-477-0041).”

Thrive Behavioral Health, another HHP member, helps individuals struggling with mental illness, addiction and homelessness. "We will remain open and do everything within our power to ensure the continued health and well-being of our staff, clients and their families," stated President & CEO Dan Kubas-Meyer. "Protocols and contingency plans are in place in response to the threat of COVID-19. Persons wishing to access services should contact us at 401-732-5656.

Additionally, HHP member Tides Family Services is focused on providing to families in a home-based setting to ensure continuity of services and a line of sight from the provider community with some of the most at risk and vulnerable populations, which is more critical than ever.

According to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger."

Additionally, the CDC states that people who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis such as COVID-19 include:

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19;
- Children and teens;
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, such as doctors and other health care providers, or first responders; and
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use.

HHP reminds all Rhode Islanders to reach out to BH Link or their local community mental health provider if they are having a behavioral health crisis or are a family member or friend who does not know where to turn for help. Rhode Islanders can call **401-414-LINK (5465)**, visit www.BHLink.org or drop in to the 24/7 center located at 975 Waterman Avenue in East Providence.

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