

**Bulletin Title: Provider Guidance to Maintain Access and Quality Care for Individuals Temporarily Housed at COVID-19 related Sites**

The Department of Behavioral Health is providing guidance to DBH-certified providers to maintain access and care for individuals already enrolled or who require behavioral health services while temporarily housed at COVID-19 related sites operated by the Department of Human Services.

COVID-19 is compounding health and health care challenges facing some of the District of Columbia's most vulnerable residents. COVID-19 has disrupted connections to behavioral health providers and social support networks for individuals diagnosed or with symptoms of mental illness and/or substance use disorders. This disruption is compounded for individuals who live temporarily in hotel sites operated by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to support individuals exposed to COVID-19: (1) Isolation and Quarantine (ISAQ) sites, and (2) the Pandemic Emergency Program for Vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness (PEP-V) sites.

The ISAQ sites are for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and do not need, or no longer require, acute hospital care but are unable to isolate at home and for individuals who are symptomatic and awaiting test results. The length of stay is generally 14 days or less depending on the date of testing and last suspected exposure.

The PEP-V sites serve individuals experiencing homelessness and living in a shelter setting who are deemed vulnerable based on age or underlying health conditions and for whom contracting the COVID-19 virus would likely become life-threatening. The PEP-V site represents a prevention strategy and the length of stay is determined by DHS.

**DHS Notification to DBH**

To facilitate continuity of care, DHS will provide daily updates to the census report to the DBH Access Help Line (AHL). AHL staff will identify individuals who are enrolled with DBH-certified Core Service Agencies and notify the CSA, DHS project management, and the DBH Community Response Team (CRT). DHS will share the DBH enrollment data with Unity Health Care which is providing medical monitoring and support at all ISAQ and PEP-V sites.

## **DBH Provider Notification**

The AHL will send an encrypted email notification to the same point of contact designated by the CSA to receive CarePoint notifications when an enrollee is involuntarily admitted to an inpatient psychiatric unit at a community hospital. The CSA designee must confirm receipt of each daily notice and attest that communication will be established with the consumer and documented in the Electronic Health Record (EHR). Please notify Johari Eligan, Director, Access HelpLine, ([johari.eligan@dc.gov](mailto:johari.eligan@dc.gov)) if your agency wishes to designate a different point of contact.

## **Maintaining Access and Continuity of Care**

1. Call the enrolled consumer using the hotel telephone and room number provided in the notification email in order to conduct a wellness check and to create a collaborative care plan. Contact the designated DHS site coordinator immediately if the room number is incorrect.
2. Establish with the consumer an agreed upon frequency of telephone check-ins using the room phone or personal device if available. Short, frequent calls are encouraged, especially for individuals in the ISAQ sites where movement is severely restricted to maximize social distancing and minimize the risk of further spread of the virus.
3. Determine whether the individual has access to technology to allow telehealth and follow best practices to maintain care.
4. Make sure the individual has in hand a 14-day supply of psychotropic and somatic prescription medications.
5. Though face-to-face contact with individuals at these sites is generally discouraged, the CSA can safely drop off prescription medications or arrange for their delivery to the hotel sites.

## **Self-Care Strategies**

Review and reinforce symptom self-management strategies and encourage the use of basic stress management tools ranging from simple breathing and mindfulness exercises to more elaborate meditation practices or yoga including guided activities that may be found on cable television.

Encourage a consumer to establish a routine that includes any suitable form of in-room exercise.

Encourage a consumer to manage their “media diet” and to monitor and report anxiety and depression levels on numerical scale from one to ten.

Help a consumer identify natural supports to stay connected virtually or by telephone while in isolation, including family and friends, and treatment team members including peer support specialists.

Encourage consumers to use the Mental Health Hotline at 1-888-7WE-HELP (or 1-888-793-4357) to talk with a mental health clinician during increased stress if the CSA and natural supports are not available or they need additional support.

## **Co-occurring Substance Use Disorders**

The CSA must identify individuals who are engaged in Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for an opioid use disorder and confirm the number of days of available medication. The CSA should coordinate with the MAT provider to make sure individuals have continuous access while maintaining safety.

## **Consultation with Unity Health Care**

Unity Health Care provides onsite medical monitoring and support at all ISAQ and PEP-V sites. CSAs are encouraged to establish communication with Unity Health Care to coordinate care and support. The CSA should inform Unity of any pre-existing conditions that may impact the monitoring and management of the COVID-19 infection. The CSA also can collaborate with Unity Health Care for prescription refills if necessary.

If a CSA is unable to reach a consumer after three documented telephone attempts, the CSA must contact the DHS site coordinator. DHS staff will coordinate with Unity Health Care to conduct a wellness check and facilitate a telephone connection.

Clinical directors or the designated CSA point-of-contacts should notify Unity Health Care if they become concerned that a consumer's behavioral health condition is worsening or if they notice changes in their physical health. Julie Joyce, the Unity Health Care Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner supporting the sites, can be reached at (202) 425-6693 or [jjoyce@unityhealthcare.org](mailto:jjoyce@unityhealthcare.org).

## **Coordination with the DBH Community Response Team**

The 24-hour Community Response Team (CRT) may be contacted when onsite DHS staff have engaged an individual who exhibits bizarre behavior, reports being in distress, or appears to be unable to regulate emotions or actions and they determine that additional support is needed but the CSA is not available. The CRT also may be called in similar circumstances when an individual is not connected to a CSA. If there is an immediate threat to self or others, please call 911 and request a Crisis Intervention Officer (CIO), if available.

The CRT can be reached at (202) 673-6495 or (202) 673-9300. When the CRT is contacted, please provide the individual's Name, Date of Birth, and COVID-19 test status. When an individual voluntarily is requesting treatment, please provide a face covering for transportation to the emergency care facility.

*Please note that the CRT should not be called in cases of a medical emergency. Please call 911 for emergency medical care.*

## **Billing**

DBH has provided guidance on proper billing for telemedicine services. The CSA should make sure a consumer's health insurance is active and assist with applying for Medicaid if eligible.

Please refer to COVID-19 Bulletin ID: 123 for guidance on PPE, telemedicine, continuity of care, medication adherence, and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder.

## **COVID ISAQ AND PEP-V Site Contact Information**

### **Isolation and Quarantine (ISAQ)**

Capitol Skyline  
10 I Street SW  
Washington, DC 20024  
Hotel Number: (202) 488-7500  
Staff Contact: (202) 615-1891

Hotel Arboretum  
1917 Bladensburg Road NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
Hotel Number: (202) 266-9000  
Staff Contact: (202) 573-5866

Ivy City Hotel  
1615 New York Ave NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
Hotel Number: (202) 529-3900  
Staff Contact: (202) 480-7301

Days Inn  
4400 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
Hotel Number: (202) 244-5600  
Staff Contact: (202) 256-8687

### **Pandemic Emergency Program for Vulnerable Individuals (PEP-V)**

Fairfield Inn  
2305 New York Avenue NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
Hotel Number: (202) 266-3000  
Staff Contact: (202) 417-1468

**Barbara J. Bazron, Ph.D.**  
**Director, DBH**

 05/5/2020  
(Signature) (Date)