

COVID-19 Update

Talbot County Emergency Services
Clay Stamp, Director, Asst. County Manager
www.talbotdes.org



Talbot County Health Department
Dr. Fredia Wadley, Health Officer
<https://health.maryland.gov/talbotcounty/>

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COVID-19 Heroes: Creative Solutions Help Address Mental Health Needs in Talbot County

There are some very creative solutions being implemented in delivering behavioral health services to the residents of the Eastern Shore during COVID-19 with coordination through the Talbot County Emergency Operations Center.

Katie Dilley, Executive Director of Mid Shore Behavioral Health, Inc. says, “I am impressed at how connected the Eastern Shore is around this issue. Specifically, there has been an outreach across partners. Our region has always had excellent peer support across partners and providers.”

Mid Shore Behavioral Health (MSBH) is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) regional Core Service Agency that serves the five counties of the Mid-Shore providing community planning, management, and monitoring of publicly-funded, medically-necessary behavioral health services across the life span for children, adolescents, adults, and the aging population. During this pandemic, one of the main goals of MSBH has been to keep the lines of communication open between providers of behavioral health services and advocate for access for consumers to services during this state of emergency.

Dilley stays connected with the behavioral health providers through an Eastern Shore Provider Network conference call held twice a week.

She comments, “From an advocacy effort, we are stronger together and it is a safe space to problem solve. Senator Addie Eckardt is on each call to provide support and guidance as well.”

Among the creative solutions to in-person office visits for mental health services are teletherapy, telepsychiatry, and telephonic delivery of care. Dilley explains, “The telehealth expansion and delivery of care have been outstanding. We have adapted quickly to these services for our populations. Through this, we have learned a lot about how we deliver services that could help us in the future to meet the

mental health needs of our rural community. Also, from a stigma perspective, telehealth could be a good thing – opening doors for clients who might otherwise be hesitant to pursue services.”

In addition to therapy, support entities like Chesapeake Voyagers, Inc., Alcoholics Anonymous, and others are using the virtual platform to continue to provide services as well.

While many of the issues of the behavioral health delivery system are being solved with teletherapy, telepsychiatry, other creative virtual options, one of the challenges that have developed during COVID-19 is that several substance use residential treatment facilities are no longer accepting new patients in response to limited personal protective equipment. On the Eastern Shore, these facilities include the A.F. Whitsitt Center in Chestertown, Warwick Manor in East New Market, and Hudson Health Services in Salisbury.

Dilley states, “This leaves us with no place for people to detox and receive substance use residential services safely and because of the difficulties people are facing, we are also seeing people re-emerging into substance abuse issues as a result of isolation including overdoses.”

“Ethically, it is unsettling. Currently, substance abuse treatment facilities are not the priority population. We often see that this population has had challenges others haven’t had.”

Right now, recovery houses continue to serve and have been given guidance on procedures to deal with the pandemic in residential settings. Dilley adds, “The educational piece is key. It will feel better when we can get protective equipment for them. Our vulnerable populations are having difficulty being served. That is driving our advocacy efforts.”

Dilley credits Dr. Benjamin Kohl, Jr., President of the Board for MSBH, with providing early guidance to handling the pandemic. He encouraged MSBH staff to support these vulnerable populations, including the region’s homeless population, so that they didn’t re-invent what happened in the early 1900s during the pandemic. She adds, “It’s been a team effort. I am so appreciative of our State partners, advocacy groups and Governor Hogan for addressing these needs.”

Beth Anne Langrell, CEO of For All Seasons, a non-profit Behavioral Health and Rape Crisis Center serving the five counties of Maryland’s Mid-Shore, reports that her agency has had to make changes as well, introducing additional telehealth and telepsychiatry options for its clients. For All Seasons offers individual and group therapy, general, child and adolescent therapy, marriage and couples’ counseling, grief counseling, school-based mental health therapy, urgent care services, Rape Crisis Response, Rape

Crisis Counseling and Support, 24-Hour English and Spanish Hotlines, and education and outreach programming.

“While our agency’s doors are still open, with some staff still on-site, we are practicing the safe and healthy guidelines of the CDC as we continue to provide much-needed services in the community. We are taking new patients,” Langrell states.

In addition to providing ongoing mental health services to its clients, For All Seasons is reaching out to the community, providing mental health tips for people who are being challenged by changes caused by the pandemic, including online videos and Facebook posts by staff.

Langrell comments, “Staying in our homes with our children, our spouses, and even our parents or grandparents for an extended time can create stress.”

She offers the following tips to help people manage their mental health during COVID-19:

- Self-care is important. Eat healthy food, get enough sleep, exercise, meditate, and get some fresh air.
- Know your red flags and identify your feelings. Name what you are feeling and take a moment to get in touch with these feelings.
- Set up a routine. Routines help us stay grounded. Structure and routines help children, in particular, to feel safe.
- Be compassionate with yourself and others. Use compassion, empathy, and self-regulation to feel centered.
- Be with your people as much as you can – virtually. Harness a reconnection with people – try reaching out to five people a day.
- Manage your expectations. Be realistic about the situations you find yourself in and be kind to yourself and others. Recognize that others are having stress responses too.
- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19.
- Call your health care provider if stress reactions interfere with your daily activities for several days in a row.

Langrell adds that For All Seasons offers crisis appointments, in-person appointments, teletherapy, and telepsychiatry, as well as 24/7 hotlines.

A complete list of mental health resources on the Mid-Shore is listed below.

Mental Health Hotlines

For All Seasons – 410-822-1018

Sexual Assault and Mental Health Crisis hotlines:

English Hotline: 1-800-310-7273 or 410-820-5600

Spanish Hotline: 410-829-6143

For other mental help tips, visit forallseasonsinc.org.

Affiliated Santé Group - Eastern Shore Crisis Response Services (ESCRS) – 888-407-8018

Phone counselors at the Eastern Shore Crisis Response and Resource Helpline work 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist with individuals who need mental health resources.

- Serving nine counties on the Eastern Shore. Four mobile crisis teams located in Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, and Wicomico Counties serving eight out of the nine Eastern Shore counties.
- Available 24/7 seven days a week, 365 days a year to respond to behavioral health and substance use crises as defined by the caller.

Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence – 1-800-927-4673

Available 24/7/365. Victims can also contact our hotline through our Website and from our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram Accounts. Emergency Shelter for victims, their children and pets is available. You can still get a protective order, and we can help you remotely. <https://mscfv.org>. Call their Easton office at (410) 690-3222 for additional information and non-emergencies.

Mid Shore Behavioral Health, Inc.

- As of March 18, 2020, all staff is telecommuting.
- The preferred way of contact is email, however, the staff is checking voicemails throughout the day if you prefer to call in.
- Visit <https://www.midshorebehavioralhealth.org/emergency-portal> for further information.
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