

Clients, Consumers & Community

Purpose of Guidance

The Hawai'i Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration (DOH/BHA) in partnership with the Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness and the Department of Human Services' Homeless Programs Office (DHS/HPO) has prioritized the control of the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Hawai'i among behavioral health and homeless populations while ensuring continuity of coverage of essential services including behavioral health and homelessness services.

These three entities along with City and County agencies will be coordinating as the Behavioral Health and Homelessness Statewide Unified Response Group (BHHSURG) in response to COVID-19. Together, these entities oversee the majority of the state's behavioral health and homelessness services systems. Other partners will be added to help coordinate and lead the response as needed. Behavioral health and homelessness services remain essential during this worldwide pandemic, and will be vital far beyond its resolution because of the pandemic's economic, social and psychological impacts. The purpose of this document is to provide unified guidance and support to staff and providers across the behavioral health and homelessness services systems of Hawai'i during the COVID-19 pandemic.

EVERYDAY PREVENTION

Practicing Everyday Prevention

Keeping you and our community safe and healthy is a shared responsibility. To learn about healthy habits, see the everyday prevention topics [here](#).

Tips Conquering COVID-19 Stress

- **Keep things in perspective:** While it's important to stay informed, try to limit your intake of news about the COVID-19 pandemic. Take a break from watching, reading or listening to news stories, including social media. Refocus on fun, engaging activities, games or crafts. And share your feelings, worries and concerns with others to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **Use technology:** We live in a time of amazing technology allowing us to stay personally connected without in-person, physical meetings. Take time from your day to call loved ones you would normally visit with in-person. Virtual, online meetings with friends and family are a great way to see and talk with them. For more information, see this resource on tips for social distancing.
- **Keep the faith, stay in touch:** Although Gov. Ige has advised limiting gatherings at houses of worship, faith communities can set up phone trees to maintain contact with others who are staying at home,

especially seniors and congregation members who are more vulnerable going out into the public. Offer to call and chat with others in your congregation.

- **Stay active:** Exercise is critical not only for our physical health, but also our mental health. Reconnect with nature. Go for walks, hikes and runs outside while maintaining social distancing. Take a moment to enjoy the calm and fresh air.
- **Reach out for support:** The DOH has expanded the services of its 24-hour Crisis Line of Hawaii to support residents who may be anxious or worried as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Call 1 (800) 753-6879, or text the word ALOHA to 741741. Staff are ready to take your call 24/7.

Taking Care of Your Mental Health

- **Continue to Seek Medical and Behavioral Health Care.** During an epidemic, patients should continue to seek health care services including preventive screenings, primary care visits, and behavioral health visits. Such routines will help you to take care of yourself during this new season. Your care providers might want to meet with you through audio or video technology. See “Tips for Using Telehealth” below.
 - SAMHSA has also identified virtual recovery resources for clients in recovery
- **Stock Up on Medication.** Fill prescriptions for 90 days rather than 60 to minimize the need to refills.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms.** Contact a medical provider via telephone if you notice increasing signs of anxiety and depression in you or your children (e.g., changes in appetite, sleep disruptions, aggression, irritability, and fears of being alone or withdrawn).

Using Telehealth

Telehealth treatment (treatment provided by audio and/or video technology instead of in-person) is a common and popular way to provide quality care to you and your family. It allows you to receive the services that you need without limitations like location, traffic, a busy schedule, or health concerns (like COVID-19). Your therapist can meet you where you are! Here are a few tips and tricks to ensure that you can get the most out of your telehealth session:

- Prepare your laptop/desktop or mobile device with internet access for your session. If you are using a mobile device, typical data charges will apply. If you don't have access to the internet, your therapist can also hold your session by phone during the COVID-19 crisis. If you don't have a phone, speak with your therapist about what you can do instead. Your team is happy to problem solve any challenge you might have.
- Select a spot with privacy and good lighting. Avoid sitting with your back to a window, as that can darken your video image. Make sure your webcam is directed at your eye level.
- Consider logging into your appointment a few minutes early to ensure your device, audio (sound, volume), and video are working properly. As always, your team or therapist are happy to help make sure everything is operating properly so that you can get comfortable with the new format.
- For child and adolescent clients, if applicable, work with your therapist on plans to include your child/teen in the session and/or to provide them with private time on your device with the therapist.

Children receiving therapy may need some preparation by you to adjust to this new way of working with their counselor, and assurance that the telehealth session will be confidential.

- If you have questions, reach out to your team. They look forward to serving you in this new, virtual way.
- For a helpful infographic on this topic see [How to Prepare for a Video Appointment with Your Mental Health Clinician](#).

Parenting During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The [Help Your Keiki website](#) is a resource for parents, developed by the Hawaii Evidence-Based Services Committee. They have identified a number of helpful resources for parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.