

Ensuring Behavioral Healthcare Amid COVID-19 Crisis

As Idaho and the nation fight the COVID-19 crisis, Idaho's Division of Behavioral Health, within the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, has developed a number of resources and strategies to ensure access to mental health and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) services and continuity of care while keeping patients and staff at the lowest risk possible.

The Division of Behavioral Health has taken the following steps to ensure people can seek help with behavioral health challenges during the COVID-19 crisis:

- Established a COVID-19 Behavioral Health Distress Line: 888-330-3010.
- Established a Behavioral Health-specific COVID-19 resource page and updated all Behavioral Health websites with a COVID-19 banner that directs people to a [Behavioral Health resource page](#).
- Awarded a \$2 million Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant to assist in establishing Psychiatric Triage Centers if an Emergency Department surge occurs, support and assistance to healthcare workers, and a temporary increase in SUD services.
- Developed a five-phase COVID-19 Strategic Response Plan.
- Assembled a statewide DBH COVID-19 Strike team that provides infrastructure to respond and plan for behavioral health needs related to or as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic in Idaho.
- Coordinating and ensuring the personal protective equipment needs of the behavioral health regions are met.
- Provided funding to ECHO Idaho to support their weekly COVID-19 educational webinar series for practitioners.
- Provided funding for HIPAA-compliant telehealth licenses for BPA Health SUD network members. Provided funding for treatment, including Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), for Opioid Treatment Program patients who are uninsured and experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19

pandemic.

- Provided support for Idaho's SUD services network in the form of: weekly calls, access to free telehealth licenses, and guidance regarding Idaho's Stay-Home Order, telehealth, and safety practices during these times.



The Division of Behavioral Health is also working with the Division of Medicaid to empower behavioral health service providers to serve patients where they are during this emergency, while using their clinical judgment to reduce risk. The following policy changes have been temporarily implemented and apply to all behavioral health providers:

- Prescription drug refill guidelines have been clarified ([Medicaid Information Release MA20-06](#)).
- Ability to use telehealth has been expanded ([Medicaid Information Release MA20-07](#)).
- Collection of co-payments from Medicaid participants has been suspended ([Medicaid Information Release MA20-12](#)).
- Providers will not be sanctioned for using telehealth technology that would otherwise be noncompliant with the HIPAA rules around technology ([Medicaid Information Release MA20-13](#)).
- Optum Idaho has lifted Prior Authorization requirements until June 30, 2020, for some services. ([Optum Idaho April 15 Provider Alert](#)).

The Division of Behavioral Health continues to develop resources and guidance for providers, clients and the community. For more information, visit:

- [The COVID-19 Behavioral Health information page.](#)
- [Idaho's COVID-19 resources page.](#)