

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON COVID-19



COVID-19 and Behavioral Health and IDD Populations

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Agenda

- **Behavioral Health & IDD System Goals**
- **Behavioral health responses to pandemics like COVID-19**
- **Key DHHS Behavioral Health Actions**
 - **Community behavioral health and supporting independent living**
 - **Safeguarding patients and residents in our state facilities**
 - **Responding to behavioral health needs and building resiliency**

Behavioral Health & IDD System Goals

- 1. Maintain & Sustain behavioral health & IDD Services**
- 2. Reduce the need for Emergency Department visits and Hospitalization to ensure access to COVID-19 treatment for everyone**

Behavioral Health Responses to Pandemics

- Potential to worsen existing anxiety and depressive disorders due to lack of control and social isolation
- Difficulty of treating some disorders with telehealth (e.g. lack of access to smartphone or significant paranoia)
- Economic impact greater for smaller businesses which are most behavioral health & IDD providers
- Staffing challenges particularly for direct care providers for the IDD community

Key DHHS Behavioral Health Actions

- **Community behavioral health and supporting independent living: Maintain and sustain services**
 - **Flexibilities and Waivers**
 - Medicaid: Appendix K & 1135 Waiver
 - Telehealth and Telephonic policies
 - Paused oversight functions that do not impact consumer health and safety
 - **Resources and Funding**
 - Immediate release of remaining Single Stream Funds for the current Fiscal Year
 - Authorized use of up to 15% of LME/MCOs Risk Reserve
 - Category B Funds from FEMA Disaster Declaration
 - Increase of 1.5% in Medicaid rates for LME/MCOs

Key DHHS Behavioral Health Actions

- **Community behavioral health and supporting independent living: Maintain and sustain services**
 - **Programs & Areas of Concerns**
 - Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)
 - Patients on long acting injectables
 - Opioid Treatment Programs (given the typical structure of daily dosing)
 - IDD individuals requiring direct care for Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)
 - Residential programs that have an outbreak
 - Community Group Homes
 - Group Day Programs

Key DHHS Behavioral Health Actions

- **Safeguarding patients/residents in state facilities**
 - **Examples of steps taken:**
 - **Closing to all visitors** to reduce potential exposure
 - **Instructing staff and patients/residents to practice social distancing** wherever possible
 - **Daily universal employee screenings**, including the taking of temperatures, prior to entry into the facility
 - **Regular screenings of patients/residents** for symptoms of COVID-19
 - **Instituting robust cleaning and disinfecting procedures** throughout each facility
 - **Alternative programming** to ensure that patients/residents and staff from different units do not congregate
 - **Establishing plans to cohort patients/residents** who are suspected or confirmed positive for COVID-19 to reduce spread

Key DHHS Behavioral Health Actions

- Responding to behavioral health needs and building resiliency



- Hope4NC 1-855-587-3463

- **Help line** connects North Carolinians to supports that help them **cope and build resilience**
- Available 23/7/365, in all 100 Counties

- Hope4Healers 919-226-2002

- **Partnership** with the North Carolina Psychological Foundation
- Staffed by **licensed behavioral health professional volunteers**
- Tailored for **healthcare professionals and their families**, includes **childcare workers**