

How Can mental health providers take care of their own mental health?

- Engage in self-care practices such as connecting with others, going outside, pleasurable and meaningful activities, and [relaxation techniques](#).
- Start a peer consultation group with other professionals using a secure online platform to brainstorm ideas for cases and get support.
- Take some time off, if and when possible.
- Schedule an appointment with a mental health provider to receive your own mental health support.
- Call or text the Common Ground Resource and Crisis Helpline at 1-800-231-1127 if you are in crisis or if you are feeling alone, struggling, or having thoughts of suicide. An online chat option is available at www.commongroundhelps.org.

Are local crisis services still available at this time?

- The Common Ground Resource and Crisis Center is still open and [taking precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19](#) in their facility.
 - Call or text the Resource and Crisis Helpline at 1-800-231-1127 before coming to the Crisis Center.

FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS DEEMED ESSENTIAL

(e.g. inpatient hospitalization, crisis settings, etc.)

What precautions should mental health providers take?

- Mental health providers deemed essential and must continue face-to-face services should follow CDC, state, and local guidelines such as:
 - Follow public health recommendations on how to [stop the spread of the virus](#) and review [guidance for behavioral health residential facilities](#).
 - Staff should immediately inform management if they have [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#). Encourage ill staff to stay home.
 - Minimize face-to-face interactions between staff and between staff and clients who have respiratory symptoms.
 - Staff in high-risk categories (those over 60 and those who have underlying health conditions) should not be caregivers for sick clients.
 - Use physical barriers to keep distance between staff and clients (i.e. install an additional table in front of check-in staff). 6 feet of separation is recommended.
 - Use gloves when handling client's belongings. [Gloves are not a substitution for good hand washing and personal hygiene](#).
 - [Wear a mask](#) when you are in an area where maintaining six feet apart is difficult or near clients with symptoms.
 - Clean and [disinfect hard surfaces](#) in common areas regularly and in compliance with [CDC recommendations](#).
 - Take all precautions for [social distancing](#) including visitors and vendors.

What should essential mental health providers do if they need childcare?

- If you are a first responder, healthcare worker, or [other essential staff](#), **the State of Michigan is working to ensure frontline and essential workers have childcare**. If deemed an essential worker and your center is closed, you can [complete this form](#) to help find childcare near you.
- If you need help finding childcare after the ["Stay Home, Stay Safe"](#) order is lifted you can contact Great Start to Quality. This is available to any Michigan family to help find quality and affordable childcare. Call the local resource center at (877) 614-7328 to help start your search.



FOR OTHER MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

(e.g. therapists, counselors, psychiatrist who can practice telehealth)

What precautions should mental health providers take?

- Limit face-to-face contact with clients and their families. Use telehealth services when possible.

What is telehealth?

- Telehealth is using a digital platform or electronic means to communicate with a client.

What orders have been put in place for telehealth services during the COVID-19 outbreak?

- Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer [expanded telemedicine and allowed homes to be an eligible originating site for patients on Medicaid](#).
- The Trump administration announced an expansion of telehealth services for seniors using Medicare.
- To read more about policy updates, see the [Center for Connected Health Policy](#).

WHAT SHOULD MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS CONSIDER WHEN ENGAGING IN TELEHEALTH?

- Review your profession's code of ethics to understand standards for using technology with behavioral health clients.
- Review the state regulatory boards' policies and laws regarding your scope of practice and ability to offer telehealth services.
- Research if any declaration of a public health emergency has any impact on your scope of practice.
- Ensure your informed consent documents are updated to include telehealth services.
- Contact the client's health insurance plan to verify coverage and confirm the plan will reimburse claims (or that the client can be reimbursed).
- Note the physical location of each client, as well as local community resources which may need to be contacted in the event of an emergency or circumstances requiring a mandated report.
- Ensure your professional liability insurance covers telehealth services.

What telehealth platform should be used?

- Providers should choose a HIPAA-compliant telehealth platform. See the [National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers](#) for options.

What protections are in place for clients using telehealth platforms?

- The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for enforcing certain regulations issued under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), as amended by the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, to protect the privacy and security of protected health information, namely the HIPAA Privacy, Security and Breach Notification Rules (the HIPAA Rules).

How should mental health providers keep clients with thoughts of suicide safe while using telehealth platforms?

- Request the client's exact location at the start of the session in case you need to contact emergency services.
- Confirm you have emergency contact information in the client's file.
- Ask directly about suicidal ideation and behavior using a tool like the [Columbia Suicide Severity Scale \(C-SSRS\)](#) and/or [SAMHSA's SAFE-T](#).
- Assess for the emotional impact of the pandemic on suicide risk.
- Inquire about increased access to lethal means in the home.
- Identify ways to increase safety at home including developing a [safety plan](#). Safety planning works mostly the same as when done in-person.
- If risk becomes imminent and cannot be managed remotely, arrange for the client to go to the nearest crisis center or emergency room (if crisis center is not available). Remain on the phone with the client until other care arrives (e.g. a first responder).
- Conduct a suicide screen at every contact for those at elevated risk. Use a standardized screen such as the C-SSRS.
- Ensure the client has the number to national and/or local crisis lines like the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 1-800-273-8255, the [Crisis Text Line](#): 741741, or the [Common Ground Resource and Crisis Helpline](#): 1-800-231-1127.