



April 6, 2020

>>> Governor Signs TeleHealth Executive Order

On Friday, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine [signed an executive order](#) that will allow Ohioans to more easily access telehealth services from individual counselors, social workers, and marriage and family counselors. In normal circumstances, a patient must have had a face-to-face first meeting and counselors and social workers before qualifying for a telehealth appointment; the providers would also be required to take special training in providing telehealth services. This order will enable those requirements to be removed so that patients can more easily access these needed services. “Mental health is just as important as physical health, and in this time of social distancing and stay at home orders, we are trying to ensure that those who need services can access them without leaving their homes,” said Governor DeWine.

>>> Private Psychiatric Hospitals: Waiver of Telehealth, Staffing Ratios and Patient Admission Assessments

OhioMHAS will consider waivers for licensed private psychiatric hospitals in the areas of telehealth, staffing ratios, and patient admission assessments. The waivers will expire upon the rescinding of the Governor’s Executive Order declaring a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals must apply specifically for the waivers listed below by email. Send all requests to: Denise.Cole@mha.ohio.gov.

Waivers to be considered:

- Telehealth use for patient evaluation and management is allowable in an inpatient psychiatric setting to the extent that it supports a similar quality of patient care that is provided through the delivery of in-person psychiatric services. This would be accomplished by liaison with on-site clinical staff who are able to provide (through use of appropriate credentials and privileges) additional clinical information and patient support services. In-person evaluation by a psychiatrist or other qualified healthcare practitioner is necessary for the initial patient visit and following any major adverse event (suicidal behavior, episode of seclusion/restraint, significant adverse drug reaction, for example) and at the time of hospital discharge.
- OhioMHAS licensed private psychiatric inpatient providers may adjust staffing ratios in accordance with Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 5122-14-10(C)(3)(a) to a one to eight (1:8) minimum nursing staff-to-patient ratio to be maintained at all times. Ratios include a minimum of one RN on each unit at all times. Staff required to provide 1:1 patient observation shall not be included in the 1:8 ratio.

- In relation to patient admission assessments required to be completed within 24 hours of patient admission (OAC 5122-14-13(E)(2)), providers may complete these within 72 hours of patient admission. A physician or other qualified healthcare practitioner must see each patient within 24 hours of admission.

>>> Resources for Adults, Parents and Families

During this challenging time in our state, it can be easy for anyone to become overwhelmed. Stress and anxiety can make it hard to cope, and sometimes many of us may question where we can get the help we need. The Ohio Department of Health has set up multiple pages with resources for anyone who is looking for help and guidance. On Coronavirus.Ohio.Gov, there are resources for adults (<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/resources/resources-for-adults-coping-with-the-covid-19-pandemic>), parents, and families (<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/Family-Activities/Resources-for-Parents-and-Families>) on how to cope with COVID-19 related anxiety.

These resources include, but are not limited to the following:

- online support groups,
- recovery support apps,
- guidance on tapping into financial support, and
- various hotlines for those who may be in a crisis or just need someone to talk to.

Please utilize these resources and share them with others as we navigate this time together.



April 2, 2020



>>> BH Telehealth Training Webinar Recording and Slides Available

The Ohio Departments of Medicaid and Mental Health and Addiction Services this week hosted a training webinar for delivering behavioral health services via telehealth. A [recording](#) of the webinar and [slides](#) are available at: <https://bh.medicaid.ohio.gov/>. Please send questions related to clinical and technical implementation of telehealth to: COVID19BHTELEHEALTH@mha.ohio.gov. Questions about Medicaid coverage, billing, and reimbursement under the new policy can be submitted to BH-Enroll@medicaid.ohio.gov.

Additional Telehealth Resources:

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[March, 20, 2020 MITS BITS](#)

[Telehealth Billing Codes for Provider Type 84s and 95s](#)

[OhioMHAS: 5122-29-31 Interactive Videoconferencing \(Rule Amendment\)](#)

>>> Telecom Policies During COVID-19

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has started the [Keep Americans Connected Initiative](#) to ensure that Americans have reliable access to the online and phone resources they need to be able to stay at home. More than 650 companies have signed the Pledge to date. This means that for 60 days, these companies pledge to not terminate residential or small business services due to non-payment, to waive late fees, and to open Wi-Fi hotspots to anyone who needs them. In addition to signing the pledge, many telecom companies have adopted temporary COVID-19 policies and are offering free or reduced services and increased data usage limits during the coronavirus pandemic. For the most up-to-date information on these policies, click the links below for the following providers:

- Charter Communications (Spectrum): Free Spectrum Internet and Wi-Fi for 60 days to households with K-12 and/or college students and educators.
- [CenturyLink](#): Suspended data usage limits, offering increased broadband speeds.
- [Cincinnati Bell](#): Providing free speed upgrades.
- [AT&T](#): Two months of free service, and waiving data usage overage fees.
- [Verizon](#): Automatically adding hotspot data for customers.

- [Consolidated Communications](#): Two months of free home internet to low-income families.
- [Windstream Ohio, Inc./Kinetic](#): Discounts to any new Kinetic Internet customer who is qualified for Lifeline benefits.

>>> COVID-19 Emergency Declaration Blanket Waivers for Health Care Providers

The Trump Administration is taking aggressive actions and exercising regulatory flexibilities to help healthcare providers contain the spread of 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is empowered to take proactive steps through 1135 waivers as well as, where applicable, authority granted under section 1812(f) of the Social Security Act (the Act) and rapidly expand the Administration's efforts against COVID-19. As a result, the following blanket waivers are in effect, with a retroactive effective date of March 1, 2020, through the end of the emergency declaration. These waivers DO NOT require a request to be sent to the 1135waiver@cms.hhs.gov mailbox or that notification be made to any of CMS's regional offices. Read [MORE](#).

>>> Responding to the Alarm: Addressing Black Youth Suicide Webinar – April 21

The Office for Disparities Research and Workforce Diversity at the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Office of Behavioral Health Equity at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration are partnering to host a free "Responding to the Alarm: Addressing Black Youth Suicide" webinar on April 21 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. The webinar will feature the co-authors of [Ring the Alarm: The Crisis of Black Youth Suicide in America](#), a report from the Congressional Black Caucus's Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health. Panelists will discuss the alarming rise in suicide and suicide-related behaviors in black youth and strategies to engage and care for these youth. Click [HERE](#) for more information and to register.

>>> Buprenorphine Patient Limits Increased in First Year to 100 for Qualifying Practitioners

Qualified practitioners who currently hold a DATA Waiver at the 30 patient limit are potentially eligible to treat up to 100 patients in the first year if they meet new criteria established by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Qualified practitioners include physicians, Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Physician Assistants (PAs), Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNAs), and Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs).

Qualifying practitioners must satisfy one of the following two conditions to treat 100 patients in their first year:

1. The physician holds a board certification in addiction medicine or addiction psychiatry by the American Board of Preventive Medicine or the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology
2. The practitioner provides medication-assisted treatment (MAT) in a "qualified practice setting." A qualified practice setting is a practice setting that:
 - provides professional coverage for patient medical emergencies during hours when the practitioner's practice is closed;
 - provides access to case-management services for patients including referral and follow-up services for programs that provide, or financially support, the provision of services such as medical, behavioral, social, housing, employment, educational, or other related services;
 - uses health information technology systems such as electronic health records;
 - is registered for their State prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) where operational and in accordance with Federal and State law; and
 - accepts third-party payment for costs in providing health services, including written billing, credit, and collection policies and procedures, or federal health benefits.

[After one year at the 100-patient limit, qualifying practitioners who meet the above criteria can apply to increase their patient limit to 275.](#) In addition, [42 CFR 8.655](#) defines circumstances in which qualifying practitioners may request a temporary increase to treat up to 275 patients to address emergency situations. Click [HERE](#) to apply for a patient waiver.

For more information on Ohio's response to COVID-19, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634). For behavioral health-specific information, visit: <https://mha.ohio.gov/coronavirus>. For behavioral health-related questions, email covid19BH@mha.ohio.gov. For COVID-19-related OTP questions, email OTP_COVID19@mha.ohio.gov, for Housing questions, email COVID19Housing@mha.ohio.gov and for Telehealth questions, email COVID19BHTelehealth@mha.ohio.gov.

In the News

- 4.1.20 | *Zanesville Times-Recorder* [Mental health services remain open, critical during pandemic](#)
- 4.1.20 | *Bellefontaine Examiner* [Local, state resources offer mental health tips during pandemic](#)
- 4.1.20 | *Columbus Business First* [Study: Most Ohio communities lack resources to protect homeless from coronavirus](#)
- 4.1.20 | *Gallipolis Daily Tribune* [HRS: explaining COVID-19 safety to children](#)
- 4.1.20 | *Marion Star* [Managing emotional, mental health during coronavirus outbreak](#)
- 4.1.20 | *Cleveland Jewish News* [How to manage mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)
- 4.1.20 | *Coshocton Tribune* [Mental health tips during self-quarantine periods](#)

3.31.20 | WKYC-TV [Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services provides tips to manage stress during the coronavirus crisis](#)

3.31.20 | WDTN-TV [Miami Valley Warmline offers mental health support during pandemic](#)

3.31.20 | WCMH-TV [Battling addiction during the coronavirus shutdown](#)

3.31.20 | *Youngstown Vindicator* [Mental health adapts during the pandemic](#)

3.31.20 | *Pomeroy Daily Sentinel* [Suicide Prevention Walk goes digital](#)

3.30.20 | WCMH-TV [Ohio providers working to prevent mental health crisis during coronavirus pandemic](#)

3.27.20 | WCPO-TV [People living with addiction face new challenges with COVID-19 quarantines](#)

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March 12, 2020

>>> State Psychiatric Hospitals Limit Visitation

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) values our patients' visitors, and the role they play in recovery and wellness of their loved one. Please be advised, that Governor Mike DeWine confirmed on March 9, 2020, Ohio's first positive coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in Ohio. The Governor signed [Executive Order 2020-01D](#), declaring a state of emergency to protect the well-being of Ohioans. Over the past couple of days the situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued to evolve and now includes cases of individuals who have not traveled to an impacted area being diagnosed with the virus. For more information on the evolving situation with COVID-19 please visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov, or call: **Call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634)**.

In response to the Governor's most recent recommendations, OhioMHAS is limiting access to our facilities across Ohio the state's six regional psychiatric hospitals by prohibiting outside visitation. At this time, telephonic visitation can occur as we finalize technology to assist with further visitation options. Outside contractors and vendors that are mission critical will be granted access to the hospital after they have been screened.



The health and safety of our patients and staff is our top priority. We are committed to efforts to prevent the spread of the virus while ensuring continuity of care for those who OhioMHAS serves.

Please know that these safety measures have been put in place as a means of protection and are not meant to isolate or limit communication with patients. Rest assured OhioMHAS staff will work diligently to incorporate the use of technology to maintain and facilitate communication between patients and their families and guardians.

In addition, we have increased the cleaning schedules at the hospitals, and staff are encouraging all people who enter the hospital to wash their hands frequently with soap and water, and to use

the hand sanitizer provided in the reception areas. These safety measures will be reassessed daily.

Practice Preventative Measures

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Call before visiting your doctor.
- Clean and disinfect “high touch” surfaces often.

Information on the Coronavirus in Ohio is evolving daily. State and local governments are working to ensure Ohioans have access to up to date information. If you have questions or would like additional information and resources, we urge you to use the Ohio Department of Health’s call center to get answers to specific questions regarding COVID-19. **Call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634)**, or visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For information and resources for maintaining behavioral health during this uncertain time and to stay up to date on OhioMHAS actions related to the virus, please visit: <https://mha.ohio.gov/Health-Professionals/About-Mental-Health-and-Addiction-Treatment/Emergency-Preparedness/Coronavirus#42351146-cdc-resources>, or visit the OhioMHAS home page at: mha.ohio.gov and click on *Managing Coronavirus-related stress* at the top of the page.

>>> Telehealth Update

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) has developed a guidance document for providing behavioral health services via telehealth. Please review and follow the guidance listed in [this document](#). OhioMHAS Director Lori Criss shared [this memo](#) regarding funding of behavioral health services delivered via telehealth with county ADAMH boards today. Stay up to date with coronavirus information specific to behavioral health providers at: <https://mha.ohio.gov/Health-Professionals/About-Mental-Health-and-Addiction-Treatment/Emergency-Preparedness/Coronavirus>.

>>> Ohio Bans Mass Gatherings of 100 or More

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today announced that Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton, M.D., MPH has signed an order to prohibit mass gatherings in the state of Ohio. Mass gatherings are defined as any event or convening that brings together 100 or more persons in a single room or single space at the same time such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, theater, or any other confined indoor or outdoor space. This would include parades, fairs, and festivals. Mass gatherings does not include normal operations of airports, bus and train stations, medical facilities, libraries, shopping malls and centers, or other spaces where 100 or more persons may be in transit. It also does not include typical office environments, schools, restaurants, factories, or retail/grocery stores where large numbers of people are present, but it is unusual for them to be within arm's length of one another. [Additional exclusions are listed in the full Ohio Department of Health order.](#) This order will take effect immediately and will remain until the state of emergency declared by the Governor has been rescinded or modified.

Other announcements made today by Governor DeWine:

FIFTH CASE CONFIRMED:

Ohio now has five confirmed cases of COVID-19. The fifth case involves a 55-year-old Trumbull County man who is currently hospitalized. The man has no travel history outside of Ohio, and this case represents a case of community spread. Governor DeWine and Dr. Acton expect that the number of cases will continue to grow, as medical experts have predicted that the number of cases will continue to double every six days.

NURSING HOMES/ASSISTED LIVING:

At the urging of the nursing home industry, the Ohio Department of Health will soon update its current order limiting visitors to nursing and assisted living homes to reflect that no visitors will be admitted.

SCHOOL CLOSURES:

Beginning at the conclusion of the school day on Monday, March 16, all K-12 schools will close to students through Friday, April 3. This order includes all public, community, and private schools in the state, but does not apply to Ohio's childcare system such as daycare centers and home-based childcare providers. Over the next 72 hours, the Ohio Department of Education will develop guidance for K-12 schools to ensure the continuity of important student services, including a strategy for providing meals.

In the News

3.12.20 | *Columbus Dispatch* [Coronavirus response: State employees working from home, visits to prisons and mental hospitals banned](#)

3.11.20 | *Richland Source* [Galion resident, OSU Mansfield student, using own recovery process to help others](#)

3.11.20 | *Hillsboro Times-Gazette (column)* [Warning signs of mental illness](#)

3.11.20 | *Columbus Dispatch* [Ohio state, local governments will pursue joint damages settlement over opioids](#)

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