



NEWS RELEASE

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Virtual Options Expanded for Mental Health Services

Pandemic shifts service delivery to web and phone for services in Marin

San Rafael, CA – Internet and phone services have been the primary ways to ensure continuity of care during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), including from providers of behavioral health services throughout Marin County. In a [joint statement](#), representatives from Marin health care providers have explained how the public health emergency has affected service delivery.

At the County of Marin, those web and phone services – collectively called video telehealth – has been expanded to all [Marin County Department of Health and Human Services'](#) (HHS) [Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Division](#) (BHRS) programs.

“With the COVID-19 pandemic constantly evolving, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed, afraid, isolated, and hopeless, and it’s crucial to remember that taking care of our mental and emotional well-being is just as important as taking care of our physical health,” said Dr. Jei Africa, Director of BHRS.

Anyone feeling overwhelmed can take steps to improve mental health every day. Small actions can be helpful in boosting emotional health, such as talking with friends, family and support systems, exercising, eating balanced and healthy meals, taking a break from stressful tasks, making a list of things that one is grateful for, maintaining a routine, and getting a good night’s sleep.

Africa said Marin BHRS saw a decrease in the number of mental health and substance abuse services at the beginning of the shelter-in-place order. However, the staff is seeing a gradual increase throughout many of its programs.

BHRS is always open and regularly offers [free online public workshops](#). Sessions range from suicide prevention conversations to support for suicide loss survivors to parenting support to a LGBTQ+ town hall. Any resident experiencing a mental health or substance use issue can call the 24-hour, confidential access line at 1-888-818-1115. Marin BHRS provides outpatient, residential, crisis services, and hospital care addressing

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specialty mental health and substance use service needs of Marin Medical beneficiaries and uninsured residents.

Throughout Marin, health organizations saw similar patterns with the need for increased telehealth services and higher demands for services. View the [joint statement](#) from the [County of Marin](#), [MarinHealth](#), [Kaiser Permanente](#), [Sutter Health](#), [Marin Community Clinics](#), [Marin City Health and Wellness Center](#) and [Coastal Health Alliance](#).

A virtual event is being planned for July 22 to bring Marin agencies together. Participants will hear more about responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and what additional patterns are emerging for behavioral health needs in Marin. The goal is to prepare for the emerging needs in Marin County and develop additional ways to support residents. For updates, visit marinhhs.org/bhrs.

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