



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Hit 'Pause,' Assess Mental Health During COVID-19

Spike in crisis hotline calls serves as a reminder to all about available help

San Rafael, CA – Mental health and the importance of reaching out and supporting one another is particularly important during this challenging public health emergency. The [Marin County Department of Health and Human Services](http://www.marincounty.org/health-and-human-services) (HHS) has noted a spike in calls to its crisis hotline and to its specialists in the [Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Division](http://www.marincounty.org/behavioral-health-and-recovery-services) (BHRS) during the [COVID-19 pandemic](http://www.marincounty.org/covid-19).

Marin is nearing the two-month mark on its [stay-at-home health order](http://www.marincounty.org/stay-at-home-health-order), which is in place through the end of May to maintain progress slowing the spread of COVID-19. Coincidentally, May is national [Mental Health Month](http://www.marincounty.org/mental-health-month), which will be noted during the Marin County Board of Supervisors meeting on May 19.

In the United States, one out of five adults has a mental illness and one out of 25 has a severe mental illness. The lifespan of an individual with serious mental illness is likely to be 20-28 years shorter than the general population because of underlying health conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease – risk factors linked to negative COVID19 outcomes. During Mental Health Month, communities across the country are raising awareness about the importance of caring for behavioral health alongside physical health.

"Approximately half of all Americans will experience a mental health challenge, yet the prospect of facing stigma and discrimination prevents many people from reaching out for support," said Dr. Jei Africa, BHRS Director. "With major disruptions in daily routines during the sheltering orders, it is more important than ever to pay attention to mental health and well-being. While feelings of sadness, anxiety, and fear are normal during times like this, it can be much worse for those with a preexisting mental health or substance abuse condition."

Marin BHRS is always open. Any resident experiencing a mental health or substance use issue, can call the 24-hour, confidential Access Line at 1-888-818-1115. BHRS provides outpatient, residential, crisis services, and hospital care addressing specialty mental health and substance use service needs of Marin Medi-Cal beneficiaries and uninsured residents.

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In support of Mental Health Awareness Month, BHRS has several activities planned, including virtual gentle yoga workshops. These online movement-based workshops to build self-awareness and mental well-being utilizing a trauma-informed approach. The workshops will include yoga and breathing exercises for all body types and abilities. Older adults are invited to attend online from 10-11 a.m. [Wednesday, May 13](#), and a session for anyone is set for 5-6:30 p.m. [Thursday, May 14](#).

Overseen by the Youth Leadership Institute, the Marin County Youth Commission posted a video series on its [YouTube page](#) and posts on its [Instagram feed](#) that shares the sheltering experience and peer guidance from a younger perspective. Marin BHRS launched a [Strategic Suicide Prevention Plan](#) earlier this year and is supporting youth-led mental health awareness activities through school-based mini-grants.

Across the Bay Area, the COVID-19 Activation Response Youth Messaging and Outreach Project aims to raise awareness about the importance of physical distancing while maintaining social connections. The goals are to help increase buy-in and adherence to public health measures and help young people understand how to stay well during the challenging pandemic.

Learn more at www.marinhhs.org/bhrs.

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