

Lighting the Way

A publication of Monroe Community Mental Health Authority



MONROE
COMMUNITY
MENTAL
HEALTH
AUTHORITY

April 2020

From the Director's Desk

In our February Board meeting, as the meeting was coming to an end, one of our board members asked me, "Can you give the board an idea of how you are preparing for COVID-19?" At that time, there was very little media discussion about how this new illness was impacting the United States. It seemed like a faraway problem for someone else to worry about. I think I chuckled and remarked, "Oh yeah, on top of my regular job I'll prepare for a global pandemic!" If only I had known how soon I would be eating those words! Preparing for and living through a global pandemic while doing our regular jobs and living our "normal" lives is now what everyone has been doing for the last month. When you take a step back and think about it, it is actually pretty amazing. We are all a lot more resilient than we ever imagined!

Here at MCMHA, we immediately began having staff work from home, finding new and creative ways to continue to serve our community and our consumers. We have all quickly become comfortable with new technologies and new ways of doing things. Multiple community agencies have pulled together to secure personal protective equipment for our staff and our providers, to secure testing, and to assure that we can continue providing the services that those we rely on us require while keeping everyone safe and healthy.

One positive thing that COVID-19 has done is to shine a light on the strength of the community mental health system. When I look at the work that CMH staff around the state, and especially here in our county, are doing, I am in awe. Our ACT Team continues to have face to face contact with the vulnerable individuals we serve. Our nurses continue to give injections. Our case managers reach out to people sometimes on a daily basis to provide support. More than once I have remarked, what would this look like if our system had been privatized?

The Community Mental Health Association of Michigan is initiating a statewide workgroup called The Accurate Picture Campaign. The Accurate Picture Campaign highlights the strengths of Michigan's public mental health system and combats the false narrative used as the impetus for a system redesign. MCMHA's Customer Services Manager, Bridgitte Gates, is collecting your stories of how Monroe CMHA staff have assisted you during this time. We are going to use these stories to highlight to the state the multiple benefits of local community mental health managing behavioral health services rather than the private, for profit Medicaid health plans.

This is a difficult time for everyone. Questions abound. How long will this last? What will the future look like? Do I really have to wipe down my groceries? In this month's newsletter we have focused on specific strategies you can use to keep yourself physically and mentally well.

Whatever normal looks like next week, next month, or next year, MCMHA remains committed to adapting our services and practices to meet the needs of those we serve, our staff, our contracted providers, and our community partners. We really are in this together. I look forward to the day I will pass you in the lobby. Until then, stay safe and know that MCMHA is still only a phone call away.

Lisa Jennings
Executive Director

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Rights Corner



The Rights Office wants you to know...

Did you know...Per the Michigan Mental Health Code, consumers have the right to possess and use their personal property. This includes belongings, clothes, money or any other owned items. This means that staff cannot deny or withhold personal property from a consumer. A consumer's right to possess or use their personal property can be limited or restricted by staff ONLY IF it's necessary to ensure health or safety AND the limitation/restriction has been approved by the CMH Behavior Treatment Committee (BTC).

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Please contact the Rights Office if you have any questions about this tip or any other Recipient Rights matters. Thanks!

Here's how to reach us:

Monroe Community Mental Health Authority
Rights Officers: Shelley L. Koysl and Coy Hernandez
1001. S. Raisinville Road
Monroe, MI 48161
(734) 243-7340

**For hearing impaired access through the Michigan Relay Center call (800) 649-3777.*

Stress and Coping during COVID-19

Outbreaks can be stressful

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. **Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.**

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- ◆ Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- ◆ Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- ◆ Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- ◆ Worsening of chronic health problems
- ◆ Worsening of mental health conditions
- ◆ Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations

How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- ◆ Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19
- ◆ Children and teens
- ◆ People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors, other health care providers, and first responders
- ◆ People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use

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Take care of yourself and your community

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

Ways to cope with stress

- ◆ **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- ◆ **Take care of your body.**
- ◆ Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
- ◆ Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- ◆ Exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep.
- ◆ Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- ◆ **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- ◆ **Connect with others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Stress and Coping during COVID-19 cont.

Need help? Know someone who does?

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others:

- ◆ Call 911
- ◆ Visit the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#); call 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- ◆ Visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) or call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224
- ◆ Monroe Community Mental Health Authority at 1-800-886-7340

Know the facts to help reduce stress

Understanding the risk to yourself and people you care about can make an outbreak less stressful.

When you share accurate information about COVID-19, you can help make people feel less stressed and make a connection with them.

Take care of your mental health

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Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.

For parents

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Watch for behavior changes in your child

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:

- ◆ Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- ◆ Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- ◆ Excessive worry or sadness
- ◆ Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- ◆ Irritability and "acting out" behaviors in teens
- ◆ Poor school performance or avoiding school
- ◆ Difficulty with attention and concentration

Stress and Coping during COVID-19 cont.

- ◆ Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- ◆ Unexplained headaches or body pain
- ◆ Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Ways to support your child

Talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak.

Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.

Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.

Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.

Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.

Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

People at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults, and people with underlying health conditions are also at increased risk of stress due to COVID-19. Special considerations include:

- ◆ Older adults and people with disabilities are at increased risk for having mental health concerns, such as depression.
- ◆ Mental health problems can present as physical complaints (such as headaches or stomachaches) or cognitive problems (such as having trouble concentrating).
- ◆ Doctors may be more likely to miss mental health concerns among:
 - People with disabilities due to a focus on treating underlying health conditions, compared to people without disabilities.
 - Older adults because depression can be mistaken for a normal part of aging.

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Common reactions to COVID-19

- ◆ **Concern about protecting oneself** from the virus because they are at higher risk of serious illness.
- ◆ **Concern that regular medical care or community services may be disrupted** due to facility closures or reductions in services and public transport closure.
- ◆ **Feeling socially isolated**, especially if they live alone or are in a community setting that is not allowing visitors because of the outbreak.
- ◆ **Guilt** if loved ones help them with activities of daily living.
- ◆ **Increased levels of distress** if they:
 - Have mental health concerns before the outbreak, such as depression.
 - Live in lower-income households or have language barriers
 - Experience stigma because of age, race or ethnicity, disability, or perceived likelihood of spreading COVID-19.

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Stress and Coping during COVID-19 cont.

Support your loved ones

Check in with your loved ones often. Virtual communication can help you and your loved ones feel less lonely and isolated. Consider connecting with loved ones by:

- ◆ Telephone
- ◆ Email
- ◆ Mailing letters or cards
- ◆ Text messages
- ◆ Video chat
- ◆ Social media

Help keep your loved ones safe.

- ◆ **Know what medications your loved one is taking.** Try to help them have a 4-week supply of prescription and over the counter medications and see if you can help them have extra on hand.
- ◆ **Monitor other medical supplies** (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.
- ◆ **Stock up on non-perishable food** (canned foods, dried beans, pasta) to have on hand in your home to minimize trips to stores.
- ◆ If you care for a loved one living in a care facility, monitor the situation, and speak with facility administrators or staff over the phone. Ask about the health of the other residents frequently and know the protocol if there is an outbreak.

Take care of your own emotional health. Caring for a loved one can take an emotional toll, especially during an outbreak like COVID-19. There are ways to support yourself.

Stay home if you are sick. Do not visit family or friends who are at greater risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Use virtual communication to keep in touch to support your loved one and keep them safe.

For people coming out of quarantine

It can be stressful to be separated from others if a healthcare provider thinks you may have been exposed to COVID-19, even if you do not get sick. Everyone feels differently after coming out of quarantine.

Emotional reactions to coming out of quarantine may include:

- ◆ Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine
- ◆ Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- ◆ Stress from the experience of monitoring yourself or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- ◆ Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious
- ◆ Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine
- ◆ Other emotional or mental health changes

Children may also feel upset or have other strong emotions if they, or someone they know, has been released from quarantine.

Five Tips for Nonjudgmental Listening

By Rubina Kapil

It's hard to be nonjudgmental all the time. We automatically make judgments about people from the minute we first see or meet them based on appearance, behavior and what they say. And that's okay. Nonjudgmental listening isn't about avoiding those judgments – it's about making sure that you don't express those negative judgments because that can get in the way of helping someone in need.

When you're trying to be there for your friend, neighbor or colleague, it's important to maintain a positive attitude and open mind to truly be supportive.

Use these Mental Health First Aid tips to be an effective nonjudgmental listener for those around you.

Reflect on your own state of mind.

Before approaching someone with your concerns, it's important to make sure you are in the right frame of mind to talk and listen without being judgmental. Reflect on your own state of mind to make sure you are feeling calm, open and ready to help your peer in need.

Adopt an attitude of acceptance, genuineness and empathy.

Adopting an attitude of acceptance means respecting the person's feelings, personal values and experiences as valid, even if they are different from your own or you disagree with them. Taking time to imagine yourself in the other person's place can help you be more genuine and empathic.

Use verbal skills to show that you're listening.

Simple verbal skills can help you show the person that you're actively listening. This includes asking questions, listening to tone of voice and nonverbal cues being used, using minimal prompts like "I see" and "ah" and not interrupting the person to give them time to express their thoughts and feelings.

Maintain positive body language.

Positive body language can show the person that you're listening and truly care. This includes maintaining comfortable eye contact, sitting down instead of standing, sitting alongside and angled toward the person rather than directly opposite him or her and maintaining an open body position.

Recognize cultural differences.

If you are helping someone from a cultural background different from your own, you might need to adjust some verbal and nonverbal behaviors, such as the level of eye contact or amount of personal space. Be prepared to discuss what is culturally appropriate and realistic for the person or seek advice from someone from the same cultural background before engaging with him or her.

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FIVE TIPS FOR NONJUDGMENTAL LISTENING

- 1 Reflect on your own **state of mind.**
- 2 Adopt an **attitude** of acceptance, genuineness and empathy.
- 3 Use **verbal skills** to show that you're listening.
- 4 Maintain **positive** body language.
- 5 Recognize **cultural** differences.

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USA MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Information provided by the mental health curriculum.

The infographic features a background image of a smiling Black man wearing a brown flat cap. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box with blue accents.

Suicidal warning signs

If you are having thoughts about suicide there could also be some behavioral and/or physical changes that could tell you something isn't right.

It might be subtle, but it's likely that you notice a number of signs rather than just one or two. Remember that everyone is different and respond differently to these thoughts and feelings.

Non-verbal indicators may include:

- social withdrawal
- a persistent drop in mood
- disinterest in maintaining personal hygiene or appearance
- uncharacteristically reckless behavior
- poor diet changes, rapid weight changes
- being distracted
- anger
- insomnia
- alcohol or drug abuse
- giving away sentimental or expensive possessions

Indirect verbal expressions may include:

- hopelessness
- failing to see a future
- believing they are a burden to others
- saying they feel worthless or alone
- talking about their death or wanting to die.

This is not an exhaustive list. Be guided by your instincts.

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Reasons for suicidal feelings

The reasons that people take their own lives are often very complex. Factors influencing whether someone is likely to be suicidal include:

Risk factors – sometimes called vulnerability factors, these factors increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

Risk factors include:

- Previous suicide attempts
- History of substance abuse
- History of mental health conditions – depression, anxiety, bipolar, PTSD
- Relationship problems – conflict with parents and / or romantic partners
- Legal or disciplinary problems
- Access to harmful means, such as medication or weapons
- Recent death or suicide of a family member or a close friend
- Ongoing exposure to bullying behavior
- Physical illness or disability.
- Protective factors – these reduce the likelihood of suicidal behavior, and work to improve a person's ability to cope with difficult circumstances.

Suicidal warning signs cont.

Talking to someone about your suicidal feelings

If you're having suicidal thoughts talking about how you feel can be incredibly helpful and a number of people can support you, depending on what you're looking for.

Where to start

At first you might share your thoughts with someone you trust and feel comfortable with – this could be someone in your family, a friend, a teacher, doctor or other health professional.

Try and think about it as just another conversation. Describe what's happened, how you feel and the help you need. It's best to be direct so that they understand how you feel.

Be prepared for their reaction. People who learn that someone is suicidal can be quite shocked and emotional. Just keep talking and together you can find a way through it.

Ask your support person to help you find **support**; in person, online, or over the phone.

It's important to have support, but if you tell someone about your suicidal thoughts, you can't expect them to keep it a secret. They'll need to be able to help you stay safe and that usually means calling in extra help.

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Keep safe

Try to focus your thoughts on finding ways to stay safe. Once you're safe you can work out how you're going to get the help you need.

It can be hard to think clearly when you're feeling suicidal, so having a plan in place means you can focus on following the steps until you feel safe again.

Make a safety plan.

Remember that thoughts of suicide are just thoughts; you don't have to act on them.

These thoughts might only last a few minutes; you might feel differently in a few hours.

Delay any decisions to end your life. Give yourself time to get the support you need.

Remove anything in the house that you might use to impulsively harm yourself – maybe give it to a friend.

Store crisis line phone numbers or web links in your mobile phone for easy use:

National Suicide Hotline—1-800-784-2433 or 1-800-273-8255

TTY—Hearing & Speech Impaired: 1-800-799-4889

Avoid being alone. Have someone near you until your thoughts of suicide decrease.

Avoid drugs and alcohol. They can intensify how you feel and make decision making more impulsive.

A mental health check-in: 14 questions to ask your child

By: Nicole Spector

Don't be afraid to ask your child hard questions — it teaches them it's okay to open up and share with you.

If your child is exhibiting any warning signs (that are not medical emergencies; get them to the ER), or if you just want more in-depth mental health check-ins, consider these questions to ask, courtesy of Dr. Eli Lebowitz, Ph.D., director of the Program for Anxiety Disorders at the Yale Child Study Center.

For concerns over possible anxiety ask them:

Is anything worrying you?

What are you doing during recess? Who are you spending time with?

How is your body feeling? Are you having stomach or headaches?

Is it easy for you to fall asleep?

Is something making you scared?

Do you have any problem paying attention?

For depression (which can go hand in hand with anxiety, and vice versa), ask your child these questions:

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Do you feel sad?

Have you been feeling cranky?

Do you know what's bothering you?

Who are your friends now? What do you do with them?

Do you sometimes wish you weren't alive at all?

For possible bullying, ask:

Does bullying happen in your school? Have you seen anyone being bullied?

Does anyone bother you at school? Has anyone hit you?

Has anything really frightening happened to you?

“Don't be afraid to ask hard questions,” says Lebowitz. “Asking about thoughts of death, for example, shows it's okay for your child to share with you; never asking shows them that it's not. [Also,] ask yourself how your behavior is changing because of your child's difficulties.”

If you're concerned about your child being in danger of self-harm, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK. It's free, open 24/7 and confidential.

Dangers of Summer driving

The dangers of summer driving are more deceptive than icy roads and spring floods. We'll break down the most common dangers to help you stay sharp under the summer sun.

So what makes summer driving so dangerous?

On the surface, driving through a summer heat wave seems quite serene compared to a winter white-out. But according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), the month of August had the second highest number of fatal car accidents in 2014, with 3,037 (right behind October's 3,068). What's more, June, July, and September each had over 2,800 fatal accidents themselves.

Here are a handful of reasons why summer often trumps winter in the danger department.

More teens on the road

When school's out, more teen drivers hit the roads. Sadly, more teen drivers on the road can mean more danger for the rest of us. The unavoidable lack of experience (we've all been there) can lead to questionable judgment that can increase the risk of an accident. And data shows that teens are more likely to be involved in accidents than other age groups.

Drivers on vacation add to road congestion

We all have our favorite summer destinations, and suffering through traffic jams is the price we gladly pay for getting there. Congested roads make for harder driving conditions and the potential for road rage, so plan ahead. (And watch out for those impatient drivers who might cut you off.)

Vacationing drivers are often unfamiliar with the roads, as well, which can lead to erratic or unpredictable driving (especially when there's something cool to look at). And because they're unfamiliar, they may drive too slowly.

Tire blowouts

Summer can do a number on your tires. As AAA explains, hot weather causes the air inside your tires to expand, which can lead to a blowout in well-worn wheels. Check your tires on a regular basis during the summer months, especially during heat waves.

Construction

Summertime is a popular time for road construction. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that construction and maintenance work zones averaged 773 driving fatalities per year from 2005 through 2014. Always be a little extra cautious when you drive around construction zones.

More bicycles and motorcycles on the road

Many cyclists and bikers take advantage of the warm weather by finally getting their vehicles out of the garage and onto the streets, which makes sharing the road a priority for drivers.

Driving alongside cyclists can make traffic maneuvers, from turning right to parallel parking, more dangerous. The IIHS reports that 720 cyclists were involved in fatal accidents with motor vehicles in 2014 alone.

Sun and excess heat

The scorching summer sun can dehydrate you on long drives, so keep a bottle of water handy. And of course, the chance of your engine overheating increases, especially if you have to rely on your air conditioner to keep yourself from overheating. If your engine overheats, pull over to let it cool down.

Avoiding the summertime driving blues

In spite of all its glorious perks, summer can be a dangerous time to drive. Season-specific variables like more teens on the road and more work zones conspire to jeopardize that easy, breezy summer feeling.

Things you can do to be safe.

Share the Road

Warmer weather attracts many types of roadway users, including motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. While they have the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as every motorist, these road users are more vulnerable because they do not have the protection of a car or truck.

Leave more distance between you and a motorcycle—3 or 4 seconds worth. Motorcycles are much lighter than other vehicles and can stop in much shorter distances.

Dangers of Summer driving continued

Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows other road users to anticipate your movement and find a safe lane position.

Be mindful of pedestrians.

Things to remember as a driver:

You can encounter pedestrians anytime and anywhere.

Distracted walking is becoming part of the distracted traffic epidemic. Keep your eyes open for distracted pedestrians.

Pedestrians can be very hard to see – especially in bad weather or at night.

Stop for pedestrians who are in a crosswalk, even if it's not marked. This will help drivers in the other lanes see the pedestrians in time to stop.

Cars stopped in the street may be stopped to allow pedestrians to cross. Do not pass if there is any doubt.

Do not assume that pedestrians can see you or that they will act predictably. They may be distracted, or physically or mentally impaired.

When you are turning and waiting for a "gap" in traffic, watch for pedestrians who may have moved into your intended path.

Be especially attentive around schools and in neighborhoods where children are active. Drive the way you want people to drive in front of your own home.

By knowing what you might encounter, you can keep yourself safe and enjoy the better weather.