



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

March 31, 2020

Behavioral Health Administration

Aliya Jones, M.D., MBA
Deputy Secretary/Executive Director
55 Wade Ave., Dix Bldg., SGHC
Catonsville, MD 21228

Dear Behavioral Health Partners:

This letter is to outline the action steps that the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) has taken and continues to take to protect our communities. BHA, in collaboration with the Governor, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and our federal, local and state partners, have been working tirelessly to remain responsive during the COVID-19 health crisis. To help ensure the health and safety of staff and those we serve, regular up-to-date communications became imperative, and continue to be widely distributed and posted on a designated web page on the following websites:

Maryland's COVID-19 website - coronavirus.maryland.gov

BHA's COVID-19 information page - bha.health.maryland.gov/Pages/bha-covid-19.aspx

Optum Maryland's website - maryland.optum.com

We appreciate during these times of great stress and uncertainty that our provider community is focused on providing quality services and ensuring access to care. We thank our provider community and all our behavioral health partners for their commitment to protecting our patients, our staff and our communities. By working together, sharing best new practices and sharing innovative ideas, we will persevere through this crisis.

We recognize that enhanced communications are essential to addressing community issues. Thus, BHA recently released Frequently Asked Questions that will be updated and [posted on the BHA webpage](#) twice a week. In addition, we introduced a designated email address, bhainquiries@maryland.gov, and a [Google questionnaire form](#) where community concerns and issues related to COVID-19 will be more quickly addressed. To provide clarity and further guidance to providers of service, weekly webinars were implemented to address specific provider group issues. Weekly meetings with the Maryland Behavioral Health Authorities, our local managers of behavioral health services, were quickly implemented to help identify jurisdictional issues.

Limiting the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring individuals with behavioral health disorders continue to get the help they need remains a top priority. Equally, ensuring provider sustainability throughout this

crisis remains a critical focus for BHA. Throughout the duration of this state of emergency, we will continue to adapt to these unprecedented circumstances. To date, we have:

- Attained a blanket exemption to take-home medications for OTPs
- Established some exemptions to regulatory requirements and expansion of Medicaid regulations, including:
 - allowances for telehealth and telephonic services
 - extension of certificates and licenses to address the continuum of care

Various communications that provide guidance on these actions have been distributed and are posted on [our webpage](#):

Behavioral Health Partners

- [BHA Response to Maryland Association of Behavioral Health Authorities \(MABHA\) Questions \(March 14, 2020\)](#)
- [NEW Frequently Asked Questions \(March 31, 2020\): COVID-19 and Behavioral Health Administration Partners](#)

Community

- [COVID-19 Guidance for Communities, Businesses, and Schools \(March 11, 2020\)](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(March 27, 2020\): COVID-19 and Maintaining Mental Health](#)
- [Wellness and Recovery Resources \(March 24, 2020\)](#)

Providers

- [MDH Letter to Clinicians \(March 13, 2020\)](#)
- [NEW Frequently Asked Questions \(March 31, 2020\): COVID-19 and Opioid Treatment Programs \(OTP\)](#)
- [Memorandum from the Deputy Secretary \(March 14, 2020\): Extension of Licenses](#)
- [Memorandum from the State Opioid Treatment Authority \(March 16, 2020\): Take-home Medications](#)
- [Memorandum from the Deputy Secretary \(March 17, 2020\): Guidance for Recovery Residences and Residential Rehabilitation Programs](#)
- [Guidance on Wellness Recovery Centers and Recovery Community Centers Closures \(March 25, 2020\)](#)
- [Memorandum from the Deputy Secretary \(March 25, 2020\): Extension of Certificates of Compliance for Recovery Residence Providers](#)
- [NEW Guidance for Therapeutic Group Homes and Residential Treatment Centers \(March 30, 2020\)](#)

- [NEW Interim Guidance on Procedures to Prevent and Respond to COVID-19 in Small Group Home or Congregate Facility Settings](#)

Telehealth

- [Memorandum from the Deputy Secretary \(March 12, 2020\): Guidance Regarding Telehealth Expansion Regulations](#)
- [Memorandum from the Secretary \(March 11, 2020\): Temporary Expansion of Medicaid Regulations to Permit Delivery of Telehealth Services](#)
- [Telephone Services Authorized for General Health Care Services](#)
- [Telephone Services Authorized for Behavioral Health Services](#)
- [Telehealth Services Authorized for Psychiatric Rehabilitation Programs \(PRP\)](#)
- [Follow-up Guidance on Temporary Telehealth Services \(March 24, 2020\)](#)
- [Telephone Services Authorized During State of Emergency for Mobile Treatment and ACT Services \(March 25, 2020\)](#)
- [NEW Frequently Asked Questions \(March 31, 2020\): COVID-19 and Telehealth](#)

We recognize that these are times of heightened anxiety and stress. We are focused on working together to ensure that our communities are aware of what resources are available to help them adapt to these difficult times. I remain encouraged that, with the continued support of our behavioral health partners, improved community wellness is achievable.

Now it is more important than ever that each of us follow and encourage others to follow the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and make available the resources and information that will help our communities remain safe, healthy and strong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aliya Jones', written in a cursive style.

Aliya Jones, M.D., MBA