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MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES REMAIN OPEN, USING TELEHEALTH IF NEEDED; RESOURCES CITED

Even in the best of times, life can be stressful. Now, with added stress related to coronavirus, many Oklahomans may be struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues.

Throughout Oklahoma, state-operated and contracted mental health and substance abuse treatment facilities, both inpatient and outpatient, are open and will remain open.

Carrie Slatton-Hodges, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services interim commissioner, said people often are frightened during times of uncertainty such as these.

“We are here to help,” she said. “There are people who care, and help and resources are available.”

The department is using CDC-established safety and health protocols to protect both clients and staff. Clients are screened as they enter facilities to determine appropriate treatment protocol, whether in-person at a safe distance, or remotely through telehealth.

“Oklahoma has one of the most advanced behavioral telehealth networks in the nation,” Slatton-Hodges said, “We are a national leader in this area and well ahead of the curve in providing these services.”

ODMHSAS employs several innovative programs based on technology to increase efficiency and reach rural Oklahomans. In addition to telehealth, the use of wireless tablets to help law enforcement find treatment for people in crisis is another program.

“Our staff is making an incredible effort to assist Oklahomans who are experiencing mental health needs, as well as finding innovative and creative ways to deliver these services,” said Slatton-Hodges.

(more)

“These are extraordinary times we’re living in,” she added. “If you’re feeling alone or struggling with your mental health or a substance abuse issue, don’t be afraid to reach out.”

Reach the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741, call 1-800-273-TALK, or dial 211 (or, 800-522-9054) to find available services near you. Those who are talking and texting back are trained volunteers or professionals in the community, ready and willing to help.

The [ODMHSAS.org website](https://www.odmhsas.org) has information and links to online support resources for families and children, recovery support services and more. The department has a strong social media presence, as well, with additional tips and links to mental health and addiction support. You also can go to the [ODMHSAS.org website](https://www.odmhsas.org) and click on the SAMHSA treatment services locator, enter your zip code, and find your nearest provider(s).

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