



SANDHILLS CENTER

Managing Mental Health, Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services
910-673-9111 (FAX) 910-673-6202 www.sandhillscenter.org Victoria Whitt, CEO

DATE: March 19, 2020
TO: Sandhills Center Provider Network
FROM: Victoria Whitt, CEO
RE: Response to COVID-19 Situation

Sandhills Center understands the important role our Provider Network plays in ensuring the availability of behavioral health services in our local communities. During times of state and national uncertainty, that strength can be tested. Taking the steps possible to reduce administrative burden and allowing the greatest amount of flexibility in continuing those services during that uncertainty is more important than ever to ensure the strength of that Network.

During the last week, we have continually reviewed the guidance of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concerning recommended steps to take in preparation and response to COVID-19. As more information about how best to mitigate the spread of the virus has been learned, Sandhills Center has developed and revised our own internal plans. To that end, the Sandhills Center steps that may be most evident to our Provider Network is a suspension of non-essential travel, suspension of non-essential meetings, the transition to virtual meetings, when possible, and the suspension of visitors, guests and stakeholders onto Sandhills Center premises. While Sandhills Center staff have transitioned to remote working options, our intention is for communication to continue as usual with our Provider Network, individuals served and community partners. If we have transitioned to new, remote work sites well, you should notice little to no change in our responsiveness.

Additionally, we are focused on reducing administrative work for our providers during this time. In an effort to assist you in reducing the number of visitors to your facilities, Sandhills Center has temporarily suspended all external audits, reviews and oversight monitoring, except for reviews involving member health and safety, that would require travel to your site. The desktop review process will continue during this suspension to expedite the conclusion of each in progress review when appropriate.

Our commitment to you is to continue to work closely with state leadership to explore all possibilities to sustain and stabilize our Provider Network during this COVID-19

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emergency. As federal or state legal, regulatory, contractual or service-definition changes are made available, we will expedite the announcement of those changes to assist in your service delivery to our members. The recent announcement of new telehealth codes by the state have been prioritized by our Provider Network staff for entering into the Alpha system and activation for your use. As other options are made available, we will continue to move as efficiently as possible to extend those options to you.

We understand you have and will be making difficult decisions as you craft your agency response to the current situation. We want to express our sincere thanks and deep appreciation to every provider organization who has developed their response plan keeping a focus on the safety and well-being of the members served. We are grateful for the teamwork demonstrated in the response to date and that will, no doubt, continue as we move forward. Your partnership is a tremendous support during this time.

Even with the significant steps North Carolina has taken to contain the spread of this virus, the spread is unfortunately expected to worsen before improvement is seen. Our thoughts go out to those around the globe who have been impacted by this pandemic, including families who have lost loved ones, individuals who are experiencing a decompensation in their behavioral health due to fear and anxiety, and those who are suffering from the economic impacts of the virus.

As the situation develops and the impacts of the virus are more fully known, Sandhills Center recognizes that it is as important as ever to continue our support of the local behavioral health system, members receiving services and providers offering those services. We are proud to know the important role we play in helping our communities through and after this event. Sandhills Center is particularly proud to have the Provider Network partners we have assisting us in that effort.

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