

## **Questions and Answers from April 30, 2020 OMHSAS COVID-19 Stakeholder Webinar**

### **General Questions:**

1. **Question:** Can you provide guidance on APAs for counties? We haven't heard from all counties on APAs to this point for community delivered services.

**OMHSAS Response:** All BHMCO's finalized APAs for ambulatory care in early April, giving providers the ability to opt in or opt out. APAs for residential and inpatient care are in the process of being finalized with providers and are more localized in determining needs and methods of relief per provider. Details on specifics for APAs should be requested from the Primary Contractor and BH-MCO.

2. **Question:** Highmark Blue Cross is refusing to pay providers for D&A IOP, and PHP services delivered via telehealth, despite the state insurance departments request that insurers provide coverage for telehealth services. Can the state help us get Highmark to provide access and payment to these needed levels of care?

**OMHSAS Response:** The Pennsylvania Insurance Department has encouraged commercial insurers to cover telehealth services. If a provider has a particular concern, they may need to work with the insurer to address their concern. If the provider continues to have questions, they may reach out to the Insurance Department for assistance at (877) 881-6366 or [www.insurance.pa.gov](http://www.insurance.pa.gov).

3. **Question:** Will OMHSAS be issuing waivers for regulations that are difficult to meet as the result of challenges created by COVID-19?

**OMHSAS Response:** In the near future, OMHSAS expects to issue suspensions of certain regulatory requirements under the emergency disaster declaration period.



4. **Question:** Will you please tell us about the two homeless programs that were discussed during the call?

**OMHSAS Response:** OMHSAS supports funding and/or coordination of two SAMHSA homelessness prevention and intervention grants.

Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) provides community-based outreach, mental health & substance abuse referral/treatment, case management and other support services for adults who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, are not connected to services, and have a serious mental illness (SMI).

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) works to increase access to Social Security disability benefits by engaging eligible children and adults who are experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness and have SMI, a medical impairment and/or co-occurring substance use disorder.

5. **Question:** How has the current crisis impacted new CHC? Is there an OMHSAS staff primarily responsible for all things related to Community HealthChoices?

**OMHSAS Response:** The Office of Long-Term Living (OLTL) has oversight of the Community HealthChoices (CHC) program. However, all individuals who are enrolled in CHC receive behavioral health services from BH-MCOs and are eligible for all services, including telehealth. OMHSAS continues to work closely with the OLTL to identify any unmet behavioral health needs of individuals enrolled in CHC. Kellie Mainzer is the OMHSAS point of contact for the CHC program. Ms. Mainzer may be reached at [kmainzer@pa.gov](mailto:kmainzer@pa.gov)

6. **Question:** We are scheduled for an ICWC review to start on May 11, 2020. Is this not occurring or is it going to be virtual?

**OMHSAS Response:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OMHSAS is no longer scheduling ICWC reviews in conjunction with licensing visits. OMHSAS will contact each ICWC to schedule a call in lieu of a visit. The change in plan for the ICWC visit does not impact licensing procedures. Please contact your OMHSAS field office contact to confirm a licensing visit/call.

Central Field Office: 717-705-8395  
Northeast Field Office: 570-963-4335  
Southeast Field Office: 610-313-5844  
Southwest Field Office: 412-565-5226

7. **Question:** What is the phone number that the governor released in his press conference about seeking services and food?

**OMHSAS Response:** The statewide Support & Referral Helpline is available 24/7 to counsel Pennsylvanians struggling with anxiety and other challenging emotions due to the COVID-19 emergency and refer them to community-based resources that can further help to meet individual needs. The number to call is 1-855-284-2494. For TTY, dial 724-631-5600.

The Wolf Administration and DHS have also outlined state and federal food benefits designed for unprecedented times like the coronavirus pandemic. The list of programs can be found at [https://www.media.pa.gov/Pages/Agriculture\\_details.aspx?newsid=919](https://www.media.pa.gov/Pages/Agriculture_details.aspx?newsid=919)

8. **Question:** Which services besides LTSR are able to request PPE? And how do they make that request?

**OMHSAS Response:** Congregate Care facilities licensed by OMHSAS can request PPE directly to OMHSAS. This includes the following licensed providers: Community Residential Rehabilitation (CRR), Long Term Structured Residence (LTSR), Residential Treatment Facility for Adults (RTF-A) and Crisis Residential providers. Child residential treatment facility providers would request PPE through the Office of Children Youth and Families which license these providers.

9. **Question:** How successful are state facilities/providers doing with the staff exit screening. We are having challenges in ensuring this screening is done consistently.

**OMHSAS Response:** OMHSAS has been successful at implementing a staff screening protocol at our state facilities. In order to streamline the screening process, each facility has established a single point of entry and a separate point of exit for staff use. Staff at OMHSAS facilities have their temperature checked and are screened with four questions that evaluate risk of exposure to COVID-19 at the beginning of every shift. Staff with a temperature higher than 100 degrees are directed to go home. Staff also have their temperature checked at the conclusion of their shift. Anyone who works a shift longer than eight hours is screened again before the overtime shift begins. Staff who work in the isolation units have temperature taken every four hours.

10. **Question:** If a provider has already submitted a request for PPE through the county DOH, does it need to be resubmitted to OMHSAS?

**OMHSAS Response:** A provider that is licensed by OMHSAS (Community Residential Rehabilitation (CRR), Long Term Structured Residence (LTSR), Residential Treatment Facility for Adults (RTF-A) and Crisis Residential providers) and who feels they meet the criteria, should submit their request to OMHSAS even if they have previously submitted directly to DOH.

### **Telehealth Questions:**

1. **Question:** Will the Telehealth Expansion keep the 90-day expiration date?

**OMHSAS Response:** No. Telehealth expansion for behavioral health services will remain in effect as long as the emergency disaster declaration related to COVID-19 authorized by the Governor continues. The OMHSAS Memorandum "Telehealth Guidelines Related to COVID-19" will be re-issued with an update that reflects this change.

2. **Question:** Is there chance that telehealth expansion will continue in a similar way that it is now after this crisis?

**OMHSAS Response:** In light of the many successes and some challenges reported related to the delivery of services through telehealth expansion during COVID-19, OMHSAS is currently seeking broad stakeholder input to support the development of revised guidelines for telehealth following the conclusion of the emergency disaster declaration. OMHSAS is currently scheduling stakeholder engagement sessions to gather feedback on this topic. OMHSAS anticipates keeping some of the practices that have been permitted as part of the telehealth expansion. If you have input that you would like to share prior to the engagement sessions, please submit your thoughts to RA-PWTBHS@pa.gov

3. **Question:** Can texting be used instead of phone calls when communicating with clients?

**OMHSAS Response:** Texting cannot be used instead of phone calls when communicating with clients. Texting is not considered a form of telehealth for delivering services as part of the telehealth expansion during the emergency disaster declaration period.

### **IBHS Questions:**

1. **Question:** Can BHRS providers receive virtual licensing for IBHS?

**OMHSAS Response:** Virtual licensing may be an option for BHRS providers, though it is dependent on the purpose of the inspection. Please contact your regional field office representative for more information.

Central Field Office: 717-705-8395  
Northeast Field Office: 570-963-4335  
Southeast Field Office: 610-313-5844  
Southwest Field Office: 412-565-5226

2. **Question:** Can you update us on the status of IBHS as it relates to the full transition; are you anticipating any future delays due to the pandemic?

**OMHSAS Response:** IBHS is proceeding without delays at this time. If you have questions specific to IBHS licensing, please contact your regional field office representative. All other IBHS questions or concerns can be emailed to RA-PWIBHS@pa.gov which is monitored daily.

3. **Question:** Has there been any decrease in delivery of BHRS or IBHS related to COVID?

**OMHSAS Response:** BHRS and IBHS services continue to be provided through telehealth and in-person, as medically necessary. Moving forward, OMHSAS is working to assess any changes or trends in utilization during COVID-19.