



Accessing Mental Health Care During COVID-19

Questions and Answers

Social connectedness and community involvement are integral to mental health and wellbeing. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are more isolated right now. Many communities are dealing with increased stress, decreased income, and having to stay at home. You may worry about seeking help for mental health or substance use issues because of feelings of shame, embarrassment, judgment of others, or the pressure to stop feeling sorry for yourself. However, 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. **We have answers.**

What Services Can I get?

Because of COVID-19 (“the coronavirus”), you or a family member may have lost a job, your income may have dropped, and now may be eligible for Medi-Cal. Medi-Cal covers behavioral health services free of cost. Your Medi-Cal application must be processed quickly if you have urgent medical needs. Apply now for Medi-Cal by mail, phone, and online.

Once on Medi-Cal, you can get mental health or substance use disorder services you need. Mental health services can help you with common concerns including depression, anxiety, suicidal or violent thoughts, trauma or major stress, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Substance use services are available for problems with alcohol, drugs, or other addiction issues.

Medi-Cal offers many mental health or substance use disorder services without cost, including therapy, psychiatrist services, behavioral support services, psychiatric medication, and withdrawal management and medication assisted treatment for substance use disorders.

How can I get help if my plan or provider does not give me what I need?

- If you tell your plan or provider what you need and you are having trouble getting the behavioral health services you need, you can call the Health Consumer Alliance for help.
- Call **888-804-3536** to get free legal help from a health consumer center in your county.
- If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired use the following: TTY 877-735-2929.

Call a **Health Consumer Center** at any time at **1-888-804-3536** if you have more questions or need help. You can also go to **www.healthconsumer.org**.

How do I get help?

Accessing mental health services can sometimes be challenging, especially when you are not feeling well. **If you or your family members experience a behavioral health emergency, call 9-1-1 for immediate help.**

- Call or email your primary care doctor or Medi-Cal managed care plan and ask for help accessing mental health or substance use disorder services.
- If you need mental health services, call the mental health access line in your region. You can find the contact information by visiting DHCS' County Mental Health Plan Information page.
- If you need substance use care, call the statewide substance use disorders non-emergency treatment referral line at (800) 879-2772, or find the substance use disorder access and crisis line for your county using DHCS County Access line page.
- If you are feeling stressed, anxious, or uneasy, please call the California Peer-Run Warm Line at (855) 845-7415, the Disaster Distress Helpline (open 24 hours every day) at (800) 985-5990, or or NAMIaccess. You can also text "TalkWithUs" to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis

Can I get help without going to the provider or doctor's office?

During the COVID-19 emergency, many services can be provided by phone, video, or text message. Medi-Cal will also pay for phone visits, which is important for people who don't have smartphones or internet access at home.

I live with other people. How do I prepare for my mental health appointment at home?

When it is time for your appointment, see if you can find a private space to conduct it. If you don't live alone, consider asking people not to disturb you during the time you will be getting services.

What if I do not speak English well?

Like all Medi-Cal services, mental health or substance use disorder services must be offered to you in the language you prefer and must be provided in a way that is accessible to you and your disability.

You can ask for a provider who speaks your language. If a provider who speaks your language is not available, you have the right to have an interpreter at no cost. There is no need to ask family or friends to interpret for your appointments.

Are services confidential?

Yes. Your provider should work to create a warm, confidential, and supporting environment.

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