

March 18, 2020

Dear Governor Evers, Secretary Andrea Palm, Kenya Bright and Joyce Allen,

We are writing to request an emergency waiver to current administrative rules and policies restricting Medicaid reimbursement for telehealth-delivered services. Further, we are requesting that additional Medicaid funding be distributed in order to increase funds for allowing and implementing telehealth services as our communities deal with the COVID - 19 pandemic. We are also requesting that Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) expand funding to not only include in-person services, but also telehealth-delivered services. This is an unprecedented event, and we believe the state must take this bold action in order to save lives and maintain an emotionally healthy community.

During this time, the level of anxiety, isolation and trauma is at an all-time high, as individuals deal with social distancing, school closings, and employment losses. All of these factors lead to tremendous stress and increased need for behavioral health support. Many folks will not seek out in-person services due to their level of fear in contracting the virus. In-person treatment also puts our therapists, clinicians, social workers, and peer support providers at a much higher risk of contracting the virus as well.

While there are now multiple resolutions and orders to practice social distancing in order to reduce community spread, an individual's need for treatment doesn't cease. It is critical to take creative approaches to decrease human contact, but still help people get their needs met during this challenging time. Discontinuing access to treatment when people need it the most could have a devastating impact, and could even lead to unnecessary deaths by suicide or overdose.

Last, many behavioral health providers must have sustained funding to ensure the ongoing existence of their organizations. At a time when we are just beginning to see the positive impact of expanding behavioral services throughout our communities, it would be a significant setback to lose programs and agencies due to bureaucratic red tape.

This is a time for us to come together, to take bold action and to fight for every life regardless of personal circumstance. Please heed our request and grant an emergency waiver, so that our administration can release additional Medicaid funding in order to provide telehealth services in the state of Wisconsin. Please send your response to Anna Moffit, Executive Director of NAMI Dane County at amoffit@namidanecounty.org.

Best regards,

Supporters of the behavioral health community

Organizations:

NAMI Dane County
Anesis Therapy
Chrysalis
NAMI Wisconsin
FOSTER
Wisconsin Family Ties
Connections Counseling
Harambe Village Doulas
The Foundation for Black Women's Wellness
RISE
Disability Rights Wisconsin
Madison-area Urban Ministry
Catholic Charities
Community Shares of Wisconsin
Employment Resources Inc.
Reflections Mental Health, LLC
Madison Trauma Therapy
Meta House, Inc
Mental Health America of Wisconsin
Heart Consulting, LLC
Easterseals Southeast Wisconsin
People First Wisconsin
Next Step Clinic
Hancock Center for Dance/Movement Therapy
Rebecca Mahan-Strupp, S.C
Access to Independence
Milwaukee Coalition for Children's Mental Health
My Choice Family Care – Care Wisconsin
Wisconsin Community Services
Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired
Medical College of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities
Goodwill Industries of Southeast Wisconsin

Practitioners:

Patti Hottmann, LCSW
William Hunter, Associate Dean-MFT, Edgewood College, Partner @Harmonia: Madison Center
for Psychotherapy
Samantha Pierce, LPC
Jordan Rozeske, Director of Mental Health Programs, FLYY

Rebecca Mahan-Strupp, LPC
Dr. Jasmine Zapata
Nicole Pryor, LPC, UW-Milwaukee College of Nursing
Hollie White, MSW, Racine County

Community Members:

Michael Johnson, CEO of Boys and Girls Club of Dane County
Sabrina Madison, The Progress Center for Black Women
Veronica Figueroa Velez, Executive Director, UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence
Fatou Ceesay, Owner Cairasu Home Care
Reverend Alexander Gee Jr., Fountain of Life Church
Melissa Mennig, The Road Home Dane County
Shannon Barry, Executive Director of DAIS (Domestic Abuse Intervention Services)
Margarita and Joshua Rubio, Dane County
Kristen Esbensen, Dane County
Corinda Rainey-Moore, Dane County
Charlie Daniel, Dane County Community Activist
Joanne Juhnke, Dane County
Rebecca Glass Miller, Grant County
Barbara Boustead, Dane County
Bonnie Schoeneman Dilley, Dane County
Kimberly Freeman, Dane County