Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update (04/01/2020)

We realize this past month has been very stressful with ever changing news about the COVID-19 (Coronavirus). Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. This can lead to emotional distress, even among those who have not been, and are unsure if they will be, directly exposed to the disease. Furthermore, appropriate and necessary precautionary measures, such as social distancing and cancellation of community events, can create stress and trigger or exacerbate underlying psychiatric conditions.

So, we want you to know that we, at Valley Cities are taking the health and safety of our staff and clients very seriously. We want to reassure you that we are making every effort to prevent the spread of this illness and still provide the much-needed service to our clients during this crisis.

Valley Cities is closely tracking provider capacity during COVID-19 to ensure continued access to services for our clients. The Governor’s “stay home, stay healthy” order recognizes behavioral health providers as an “essential workforce” that is needed to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure in the state, and exempt from the requirement to stay home. To ensure access to behavioral health services during the COVID-19 crisis, Valley Cities formally adopted the following expectations:

- Behavioral health crisis services, intake services, and ongoing work with existing clients are deemed and defined essential services. We have protocols in place for in-person services.
- Call Center and Front Desk have implemented phone screening when making reminder calls and appointments to determine if a client is symptomatic of illness and phone, telehealth appointments/services are being encouraged for all outpatient clinical services at this time.
- Outpatient staff are encouraged provide essential services through telehealth modalities or phone contact when possible to minimize direct client contact.
- If a client is not able to get care through telehealth or telephonically, in-person care is still available at all sites.
• We have maximized telehealth capacity, aligned available resources/funds to provide system-level support and build telehealth capacity.

• **Inpatient Facilities** are open for services. On call staff will be utilized and overtime will be authorized as needed for staff shortages.

• Valley Cities Leadership will make all decisions based on guidance from Public Health and the CDC.

• Valley Cities is not planning to close clinics at this time, and Public Health is not recommending closure. We understand there is anxiety around this virus and want to support our staff and clients. VC has an Infection control ticketing system ([infectioncontrol@valleycities.org](mailto:infectioncontrol@valleycities.org)) for additional questions and concerns.

We recognize and deeply appreciate the extraordinary efforts that many providers are taking to ensure clients receive the care they need. Given we cannot fully anticipate the length and duration of COVID-19 and the impact on our community, clients, and workforce, Valley Cities recognizes that we will need to be flexible and plans to actively evaluate needs and resources available to support essential behavioral health services.

**Closures are:**

• All in-person group services are suspended until further notice.

• All Resource Rooms are Closed until further notice.

• Aurora and Lake City Clinics are also closed until further notice. Current or potential clients in this location in need of an appointment are recommended to go to: Meridian Center for Health: at 10521 Meridian Ave. N. Seattle, WA., 98133 206.296.4990 Bus routes: 16, 40, 316, 345, 346