

NCSS' commitment to service delivery during COVID-19

The dramatic impact that COVID-19, Novel Coronavirus, has had on families and our community has led NCSS to transition how services are delivered. In an effort to counter this insidious virus NCSS is committed to minimizing exposure to COVID-19 for all staff and individuals served while ensuring that people in our community has access to the care they need. With a focus on the health and wellbeing of the over 4,000 individuals that we serve, our staff, and the community at large; NCSS is offering many services through phone and videoconferencing platforms to maintain services while optimizing safety.

NCSS is committed to continuing to provide all essential services, as ordered by our Governor, the Agency of Human Services (AHS), and the Department of Developmental Aging and Independent Living (DAIL). Decisions are made and plans adjusted as new information becomes available.

Crisis and Mobile Outreach services remain available to meet the needs of the community by contacting 802-524-6554 then press 1. Psychiatry, outpatient, and case management services have transitioned from face-to-face to almost 100% remote utilizing telehealth technology such as video conferencing to maintain a high quality standard of care. The integrated health team continues their work with the NMC Emergency Department, NOTCH sites, and Primary Care Providers (medically centered homes) working remotely. In addition to maintaining 24/7 staffing for our residential programs, we continue to strive to keep our crisis bed program operational for increasing demands. Continuing Outreach efforts across teams include: medication deliveries for those with severe mental illness to prevent decompensation, direct support in home for those in distress, continuing partnership with law enforcement and outreach to individuals based on call needs, assisting with Meals on Wheels with deliveries to assist with gap in volunteers, outreach to individuals who are homeless. Consultation to other provider systems is also an area of increased activity. We continue to answer calls for Vermont during designated hours for the National Suicide Lifeline.

The Main Office at 107 Fisher Pond remains open, only for a few unique situations. All of our other office sites are open, but public access is reduced and we are supporting staff to work remotely. Residential locations continue to be staffed due to the direct care and support required. With the exception of our residential teams, and a few other unique services, almost our entire support system has become electronic. We will strive to protect our employees from COVID-19, while concurrently providing high quality care to the people that need it the most.

We also can deploy core emergent staff to support individuals that are considered "high risk", providing well checks or needed services. We are committed to continuing our partnerships with community stakeholders and providing essential care coordination on behalf of clients through means that promote safety and quality care.

We find ourselves in the midst of an unprecedented situation where both education institutions and the systems put in place to support our most vulnerable children and their families are being stretched in ways no one ever imagined. We are working to make sure the students, schools, and

families we serve continue to receive the support necessary to continue to access their academics and sustain progress towards the social and emotional goals that are a key part of our role. We're also supporting schools and communities by assisting with meal preparation, food delivery, and essential worker daycare.

We continue working with staff to continue working with their identified clients remotely. This will involve our staff coordinating support with both families and school personnel to identify times and methods in which services will be delivered. The focus of this work is the same as it is in the school setting, although the hours maybe somewhat variable depending on a host of circumstances. In addition, the NCSS Soar Learning Center, alternative education and day treatment program, has moved to an on-line remote learning model.

With all developmental services community supports provided by direct staff suspended, we recognized there would be emergent needs. In response, a drop in site at 27 Lower Newton Street (Academy of Learning) has been established that can be utilized by all families, individuals, guardians and shared living providers. By calling 802-393-6628 to pre-schedule a drop off time for individuals served where we can keep "social distancing", and have staff available while the individual served can attend to emergent needs, e.g. doctor appointment, grocery shopping, attending to family members. Screening questions will be required to be sure no one entering is symptomatic.

Developmental Services Service Coordinators have identified individuals that have acute medical needs, live alone, and need medication delivery, meal preparation etc. We will assign core emergency staff to do check in's or onsite assistance, as needed. In addition, the Developmental Services Crisis Team is accessible at 802-393-6688.

We're also in the process of setting up a COVID-19 residential temporary housing option for NCSS clients displaced during the coronavirus COVID-19 crisis. The option was established to reduce the surge on NMC by diverting NCSS clients needing care to an alternate location. The temporary housing will be located at the NCSS Soar Learning Center with the ability to care for up to eight clients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or those that can't remain with a home provider due to health concerns.

Additional information is available on the recently developed COVID-19 tab on the NCSS website Homepage at www.ncssinc.org.

ABOUT NORTHWESTERN COUNSELING & SUPPORT SERVICES (NCSS): Since 1958, NCSS a private, non-profit, human services agency has been serving Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. NCSS provides intervention and support to children, adolescents, and adults with emotional and behavioral problems; a mental health diagnosis; adolescent substance use; and an intellectual disability or developmental delay. Over 600 staff members help over 4,000 people each year in 17 locations in collaboration with community partners. NCSS' 24/7/365 crisis team and mobile outreach is available to meet the needs of Franklin and Grand Isle County children, adults, and families in crisis by calling 802-524-6554 then press 1. www.ncssinc.org NCSS... *we're here for you.*

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