

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | March 24, 2020

## **Human Services' public behavioral health clinics continue to serve vulnerable North Dakotans**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The coronavirus continues to disrupt lives and cause stress, anxiety and fear. In response, the North Dakota Department of Human Services' eight regional human service clinics and their four satellite clinics are continuing to provide medically-necessary behavioral health services to vulnerable North Dakotans. The clinics located in Bismarck, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Minot and Williston with satellite clinics in Grafton, Rolla, Valley City and the Off Main location in Fargo, offer behavioral health services focused on chronic disease management and behavioral health crises.

The clinics primarily serve individuals with chronic, serious mental illness and substance use disorders, including pregnant women and others who use intravenous drugs.

"The clinics remain open and staffed by our dedicated behavioral health professionals. We will continue to serve individuals in crisis and others who are experiencing serious behavioral health needs," said Dr. Rosalie Etherington, chief clinical officer for the state's human service clinic system.

To promote social distancing, select in-person group therapies have been temporarily halted and replaced with expanded telebehavioral counseling and therapies offered either by telephone or video teleconferencing based on a client's need. Other changes include limiting group sizes to 10 people or less, arranging seating to support social distancing and staggering times of treatment at the clinics.

Etherington said crisis services offered at the clinics will continue without any changes. Individuals in crisis will still be able to access walk-in assessment and triage services during regularly scheduled walk-in hours, and the confidential crisis phone lines for clients will be answered 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition, clients will continue to receive their medications either through on-site medication administration, medication delivery or an agreed upon alternative method. In-home supports will continue uninterrupted.

**Human Services' public behavioral health clinics  
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**Page 2**

The clinics are taking proactive steps to keep clients and staff safe by using a health screening tool for COVID-19 and checking temperatures of all clients and staff members entering the clinics and residential facilities. The clinics are following the self-isolation recommendations from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the North Dakota Department of Health. Staff have also increased the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing lobby seating areas, offices and other public common areas.

"Our amazing staff are working hard to retain services to clients during these challenging times, and we appreciate everyone's patience as we make temporary changes to our operations," Etherington said.

For more information, including a list of crisis phone numbers and behavioral health walk-in hours at each clinic, visit [www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/regionalhsc/](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/regionalhsc/).

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