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NCDHHS

NCDHHS Shares Strategies for Counties to Support Behavioral Health and Intellectual and Developmental Services during COVID-19 Crisis

Raleigh, N.C.

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The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) shares recommended strategies to support local solutions to maintain and sustain services for individuals with behavioral health needs and intellectual and developmental disabilities along with reducing the burden on emergency departments and hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

NCDHHS has acted aggressively to create flexibilities designed to sustain and bolster the behavioral health and intellectual and developmental disability system during the COVID-19 emergency. With additional regulatory latitude in place, the proposed actions can be taken at the local level to assist in supporting services and mitigating the current health crisis. The strategies are directed at local government agencies, community organizations, local management entity/managed care organizations (LME/MCOs), behavioral health providers, hospitals in communities across the state and other partners.

“A well-functioning behavioral health and intellectual and developmental disability system is essential to our health care system, now more than ever as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Kody Kinsley, Deputy Secretary for Behavioral Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. “It’s critical that partners coordinate effectively at the local level to develop solutions tailored to the needs and unique circumstances of communities.”

In addition to waivers and flexibilities granted at both the state and federal levels, NCDHHS has prioritized ensuring resources are available to meet immediate behavioral health and intellectual and developmental disability needs during the crisis.

NCDHHS does not mandate actions at the local level but offers opportunities for collaboration. Strategies include ways to minimize the flow of patients to emergency departments, ideas to safely discharge a stabilized patient from a hospital, suggestions to manage jail and justice-involved populations, and options to meet non-medical drivers of health like housing, transportation, and food.

Additional guidance specifically aimed at reducing the number of people in the hospital has also been released to stakeholders. The COVID-19 pandemic has created complications for caregivers accompanying their family members who have a cognitive or intellectual disabilities to medical and health care visits. The guidance focuses attention on individual’s legal rights in the context of hospitals’ infectious disease mitigation strategies and policies. It is important that rights are protected, appropriate care and treatment is delivered and public health is protected.

Make sure the information you are getting about COVID-19 is coming directly from reliable sources like the CDC and NCDHHS. For the latest guidance from NCDHHS to stakeholders and the public, visit www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/covid19/covid-19-guidance (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/covid19/covid-19-guidance).

For additional information, please visit the CDC’s website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus (http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) and NCDHHS’ website at www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus (http://www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus), which includes daily updates on positive COVID-19 test results in North Carolina.

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