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Huntington and Charleston, WV: COVID-19 or “the Coronavirus” is presenting new challenges to everyday life for all of us. Every day it seems that more information is available, new recommendations are released, and we become more frightened.

Prestera Center is implementing all recommendations released by the CDC and state governmental authorities. We will continue to provide care to individuals in the communities that we serve but will do so in ways to keep our clients and staff as safe as possible. Therefore, we are implementing the following practices:

- We ask all staff and clients who are ill to stay home.
- We will be screening staff and clients who live in, or enter, our facilities according to established guidelines. Individuals who present with symptoms will be referred for additional screening or care at that time.
- Additional training has been provided to staff relative to the COVID-19 and ways to keep each other and our clients safe. We have implemented “social distancing” and encourage all clients and staff to handwash frequently for 20 seconds.
- Protective equipment and supplies, such as disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, masks and gloves are being obtained and distributed to our sites.
- We are working with our staff to ensure that outpatient services are provided via telehealth or telephone instead of face-to-face in our clinics. Staff are contacting clients now to notify them of this change in practice and obtain correct phone numbers. Large groups are discontinued.
- Visitation in our residential programs is prohibited at this time. Communication can occur through phone calls.
- Staff will not be visiting clients’ homes at this time, but regular contacts will be made using telephones or other technology.
- Our crisis unit and residential programs will continue to operate as usual, although extra precautions to ensure safety are in place.

- We continue to provide crisis services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but these will also occur through the use of technology. Our staff will not be entering hospitals, jails or other facilities at this time.

There are also ways that individuals can care for themselves, including:

- Stay home whenever possible and when it is necessary to go out, practice “social distancing” which is staying at least 6 feet from other people.
- Handwashing for at least 20 seconds is still one of the best methods to prevent contracting the virus, as well as keeping your hands away from your face.
- People remaining in their homes have lost access to many normal daily social contacts and support group meetings that help sustain positive mental health and recovery. Staying home is fine, isolating is not. Computers and telephones offer opportunities to stay in touch with family and friends. Staying connected and helping one another is critical.
- Make sure that you eat properly, drink plenty of fluids, get enough rest, and exercise to maintain good physical health.

The National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) provides a website at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) that lists support resources, information on the Coronavirus, advocacy and phone lines. Alcoholics Anonymous is offering online support group meetings at <http://aa-intergroup.org>. Narcotics Anonymous is offering online support group meetings at <https://www.intherooms.com/home/>.

If you need help immediately, call 911. In a psychiatric emergency, you can call the Pretera Center emergency line at 1-800-642-3434. A psychiatric emergency is different for different people. It could include extreme nervousness, panic or anxiety, increasing paranoia, delusions (believing things that are not real), hallucinations (seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not real), severe depression, and considering suicide or homicide or both. If you or someone you know are thinking about suicide, call or live chat the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK). There’s also a National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE).

Pretera Center will continue to work to keep our clients and our staff as safe as possible and will continue following all recommendations issued by authorities. We understand that the need for our services does not diminish, and in fact, increases as we all face this frightening health crisis. We will continue to make every effort to fulfill our mission of “helping people achieve their full potential” as much as possible.

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