With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Charles County residents saw businesses close and social activities come to a stop. However, mental health needs did not take a break, and the CCRB commends their 32 agency partners for quickly adapting their service models and programs to accommodate their clients’ needs.

Stress, anxiety, fear, and depression are some of the emotions clients experienced, as well as increased behavioral outbursts due to changes in routine. School closures shifted greater responsibility to caregivers, increasing stress as caregivers juggled supporting educational needs and employment or caring for family members.

While offices and facilities were closed, employees worked remotely to remain in touch with clients, provided therapeutic support, and offered much-needed services through video conferencing, telehealth, and phone calls. Agencies also created no-contact supply drop-offs to provide food, hygiene products, and other items to families in crisis. Through it all, clients remained at the center of agencies plans.

Tips for Talking to Kids about Anxiety and Stress

Children navigate many changes in routine, social opportunities, and disappointments during their childhood. Speaking with them about the anxiety, stress, or confusion they may be experiencing can ease their anxiety and better equip them with ways of managing stress.

1. Welcome their questions.
2. Don’t avoid questions you can’t answer.
3. Set the tone.
4. Be developmentally appropriate.
5. Take your cues from your child.
6. Deal with your own anxiety.
7. Be reassuring.
8. Focus on what you are doing to navigate any changes or challenges.
9. Keep the dialogue open.

Free and low-cost professional help is available for all. Call or text the BHR Youth Connection Helpline for 24 hour assistance and linkage to resources.
1-844-985-8282 or BHEARD to 31658

Source: childmind.org; Adapted from “Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus Crisis”, by Rachel Ehmke

News from the Field

The CCRB funds 50 mental health programs delivered by 32 partner agencies serving St. Charles County. This feature will share news from our agency partners.

- **CHADS Coalition for Mental Health** offers Tele-Behavioral Health (TBH) services for youth struggling with symptoms of anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts. TBH is targeted, short-term counseling support for the child and the therapist will work with caregivers to ensure communication and safety planning. For information, contact 314-952-8274. [www.chadscoalition.org](http://www.chadscoalition.org)

- **Compass Health Network** quickly pivoted all clinical services to virtual platforms as the pandemic crisis escalated. Programs provided continuity of care and needed services to children and their families during the crisis. The Prevention Program created new videos for teachers and families to access online and Compass established a Disaster Access Crisis Hotline for crisis support (888-237-4567). Para Español, por favor llame al (636) 445-7177.

- **LINC St. Charles County** offers a summer lunch program for Wentzville families. Homeless or near homeless individuals can contact LINC for help with housing, personal care items, crisis counseling, and academic tutoring needs. [www.lincscc.wordpress.com](http://www.lincscc.wordpress.com)

- **Lutheran Family & Children’s Services** has resumed face-to-face services for clients. Mental health counseling services are available in English and Spanish. [www.lfcs.org](http://www.lfcs.org)

- **Megan Meier Foundation** (MMF) provides individual mental health counseling to youth under the age of 19 struggling with bullying, cyberbullying, and thoughts of suicide. Services are free of charge. Currently, MMF is offering
- NAMI St. Louis programs have moved to online. Visit their website to register for a support group, educational presentation on mental health, speaker series, and much more. The NAMI HelpLine is available 7 days a week, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Please call (314) 962-4670 or email at info@namistl.org. [www.namistl.org](http://www.namistl.org)

- The Child Center reports children have limited access to safe adults and mandated reporters right now. They need you to be the eyes and ears in our communities to prevent and stop child abuse. Be aware, know the signs, and what to do if you suspect abuse or neglect. If you suspect abuse, call the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-392-3738. To schedule a mandated reporter training, email Porscha Thorpe, pthorpe@cacnemo.org.

- The Sparrow’s Nest Maternity Home (TSN) has openings for expecting moms under age 21. TSN provides loving, long-term residential care and support for young moms and their child. TSN is collaborating with Strong Tower Ranch to develop an equine therapy program for residents. [www.thesparrowsneststl.org](http://www.thesparrowsneststl.org)