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COVID-19 Response

Tillamook County - Essential or Non-Essential? The Mental Health Impact

TILLAMOOK, Ore. — The most recent executive order issued by Governor Kate Brown directs Oregonians to stay at home to the maximum extent possible to help reduce the potential spread of COVID-19. Along with the executive order, a list of businesses that are temporarily closed was announced.

The Governor's office has developed a quiz to address confusion about which businesses should remain open (see resources below). Some questions, not addressed in the quiz, have arisen about whether support groups for addiction and mental/behavioral health care, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and others, are considered "essential" under the new order.

"We want to advise people that behavioral health and addiction services are essential for those that are participating in them, as they are suffering from a life-threatening and relapse prone illness," commented, Rex Parsons, M.D., medical director at Tillamook Family Counseling. "Addiction meetings are a form of recovery support/treatment and not simply a "social gathering"," advised Dr. Parsons. In support of Dr. Parson's comments, County Community Health Center Administrator, Marlene Putman, added, "While participating in these groups participants just need to exercise the recommended precautions." Participating individuals should use appropriate physical/social distancing, not share food or pass donation baskets, and not attend meetings when ill.

While in-person and virtual visits for behavioral health and addiction services continue to be available through Tillamook Family Counseling Center, the Health Center, and other local

partners, there are several resources now available for virtual group or individual services. The Oregon Recovery Network partnered with 'Recover Together with Google' to provide Oregonians state and local recovery resources. Dual Diagnosis Anonymous has also setup virtual meetings and online chat rooms (see resources below).

COVID-19 has caused an increase in stress and anxiety across the nation. These are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. We are all better at managing stress when we stay connected to friends and people we love. It is important to access behavioral services, if you need them. Clinics and providers serving mental health patients have shifted their practices, including ours. We are now offering telehealth visits to reduce the spread of COVID-19. If you need an appointment, please call: 503.842.3900.

"Our community is known for coming together and for looking out for each other in a crisis," Putman continued. "We are lucky to have each other as neighbors."

Volunteer groups across the county are mobilizing to offer ways to provide donations and assistance to meet individual and community needs. These needs can range from grocery delivery to just a simple phone call to talk. Loneliness can be difficult to bear during this time of isolation. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has a crisis line available at all times: 1-800-985-5990. The Institute on Aging also developed the 'friendship line' available at all times aimed for older adults: 1-800-971-0016. For additional resources please check the Tillamook County Wellness COVID-19 Resource page. Tillamook County Wellness is an initiative by Tillamook County Public Health Department.

About Tillamook County Community Health Centers

TCCHC has been a Federally Qualified Health Center since 1994, providing medical, dental, behavioral and public health services. Please visit our website at <https://tillamookchc.org/> or on Facebook at TillamookCHC.

Resources:

Oregon Coronavirus Information & Resources (essential business quiz):

<https://govstatus.egov.com/or-covid-19>

The Oregon Recovery Network:

<https://oregonrecoverynetwork.org/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus>

Dual Diagnosis Anonymous:

<https://ddainc.org/>

Tillamook County Wellness COVID-19 Resources:

<http://tillamookcountyhealthmatters.org/covid/>

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