



For Immediate Release
Contact: Kristen Miller
(502) 649-1499
wellredkristen@gmail.com

Mental Health Services Can't Wait

*During Mental Health Awareness Month, Local Providers Caution Against
Delays in Care Due to Coronavirus*

BOWLING GREEN, KY (May 6, 2020) – There's a new, dangerous side effect of the current coronavirus pandemic – Americans are holding off on seeking needed healthcare services.

Research has shown that up to a third of Americans are forgoing medical treatment or preventative care during the pandemic, often due to fear of being exposed to the virus. And providers of mental health services are seeing a similar trend; some mental health crisis teams are reporting an almost 50% drop in patient referrals.

As increased access to testing means the number of coronavirus cases in the region is likely to continue to grow, mental health services providers LifeSkills and Pennyroyal Center are reminding residents that feeling more stress and anxiety than usual is normal – and so is reaching out for help.

"May is recognized as Mental Health Awareness month in the U.S., and during these difficult times, it's more important than ever for us to pay attention to our mental health," said Joe Dan Beavers, LifeSkills President and CEO. "Anyone who needs assistance should not put off asking for help. LifeSkills is taking all the necessary precautions to ensure we can safely provide the mental health services our community depends on. So, if you need support, don't wait to reach out to us."

Both LifeSkills and Pennyroyal are complying with social distancing recommendations by offering outpatient services such as individual and family therapy, case management and peer and community support via telehealth. While most employees are now working remotely, any staff member whose job requires in-person contact and who feels ill for any reason is required to stay home from work and remain there for at least 72 hours after their symptoms have ended.

Inpatient and residential services are operating pursuant to strict evidence-based protocols, including:

- On-site staff receive regular training on Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and on how to correctly use and dispose of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- They are also required to perform temperature checks prior to start of each shift and are not allowed to bring any personal items with them to work.
- Clients have received training on social distancing and the use of PPE, and they are not allowed to congregate in common areas.

- Food and supplies are being delivered on a regular basis to residential locations, and those facilities are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected daily.

While the teams at LifeSkills and Pennyroyal were quick to implement these and other recommended action plans, they also acknowledge that like any other health or human services provider, they have been and will continue to be affected by the spread of the coronavirus.

“A handful of our employees and patients have tested positive, and we expect that will continue as the number of cases in our area approaches its peak,” said Eric Embry, Pennyroyal’s CEO and Executive Director. “That’s why we’re laser-focused on what we can control – working to meet and often exceed all CDC guidelines, continually replenishing our stock of PPE and following our protocols to the letter.”

In fact, managing those things that are within your control is advice the team would give to anyone experiencing additional stress during these uncertain times.

“Our world has been upended over the past two months. People are suddenly at home caring for family members, helping children with school assignments and experiencing economic instability, so it’s normal to feel increased levels of anxiety,” said Beavers. “We can’t always control what’s going on in the world, but we can control how we react to it. We can help ourselves by staying in the present, reframing our own thoughts to be more positive, building new routines into our day and staying connected to friends and family. Even just stopping to take deep breaths a few times each day can make a difference.”

Both agencies are providing more useful information on topics such as managing anxiety, maintaining sobriety during difficult times and helping children cope with uncertainty on its social media channels. Visit LifeSkills on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn to hear more from their trained staff of providers.

If you, a friend or family member would like to talk to someone about the mental health services provided by LifeSkills and Pennyroyal, you can contact them at the following phone numbers:

- In the Bowling Green area, call (270) 901-5000.
- In the Hopkinsville area, call (877)-473-7766.
- And if you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, please call the agencies’ shared 24/7 help line at (800) 223-8913.

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About LifeSkills, Inc.

LifeSkills has been a part of the community for the last 50 years. As a non-profit, community mental health center, LifeSkills supports people who experience mental illness, addictions and developmental disabilities as they build meaningful and independent lives. With the widest array of services for both adults and children in south central Kentucky, LifeSkills gives you greater choice, easy access and proven quality. When it comes to your health, experience matters.

About Pennyroyal Center

The Pennyroyal Center was established on February 15, 1966 as a non-profit, community mental health center. From its inception, Pennyroyal Center has been and continues to be known as the standard of excellence in the fulfillment of its mission to plan and provide person-centered services in behavioral health, substance use, and developmental and intellectual disabilities for all citizens within our region.