THE HELEN WHEELER CENTER

 FOR COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

COVID-19

Response, Protocols and Procedures

The Helen Wheeler Center is concerned with the unprecedented challenges we are all facing due to COVID-19. Please know that during this time of uncertainty, the health, safety and well-being of consumers, our guests and our staff is our highest priority.

As the Covid-19 situation is rapidly changing in the United States and the state of Illinois, we are continually monitoring and planning for all contingencies. We are all concerned for the health and welfare of our consumers and employees, as well as the overall community, so we will stay aware and cautious as this moves forward. However, we must be proactive and take steps to ensure the safety of everyone who comes into contact with our facility and staff. As a result, we are taking certain precautionary steps to ensure the health and safety of all. We will continue to monitor guidelines prescribed by the CDC and are in regular contact with our Local Health Department for ongoing guidance as well.

The Helen Wheeler Center is adhering to the following standards for customers and staff, which are advised by the CDC. If you are experiencing any of the following, please stay home, call and reschedule your appointment:

* If you are feeling ill, or think you may have the flu please stay home
* If you have symptoms of acute respiratory illness it is recommended you stay home until you are free of fever (100.4) for at least 24 hours.
* If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, please stay home and reschedule your appointment:
	+ Fever/chills
	+ Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
	+ Sore throat
	+ Runny or stuffy nose
	+ Cough
	+ Muscle or body aches
	+ Headaches
	+ Fatigue/tiredness
	+ Vomiting and/or diarrhea

**Please be advised of the following safety measures:**

Hand sanitizer is placed at the front desk for client use upon entering the facility, as well as use upon exit.

Face masks are available at the front entrance (as well as other locations in the facility) if found to be necessary for client use.

Tissues are also placed at the front desk, and when used hand sanitizer shall also be used immediately following.

**When a consumer enters for their scheduled appointment, please advise them of the following:**

Signage is placed at the front entrance including educational materials and also asking the following prior to entering the facility:

1. Within the last 14 days, have you traveled to a country for which the CDC has issues a level 2 or 3 travel destination (these include China, Iran, South Korea, Italy or Japan)?
2. Have you had contact with any person who is showing symptoms for COVID-19 within the last 14 days, OR with anyone know to have COVID-19?
3. Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (cough, fever, shortness of breath)?

If there is a “yes” response to any of the above questions, the guest is asked to put on a face mask, alert the front desk staff that they are present and will be entering a separate waiting area. Front desk staff shall alert clinical staff who will respond to the customer.

They will be asked to place themselves in a separate waiting room with the door closed to limit exposure to others. Clinical staff shall instruct them to contact IDPH for further direction in the event they responded yes to question 1 or 2.

If the consumer answered “yes” to question 1 or 2, and YES to 3, instruct them to immediately contact their medical provider and Local Health Department, and if they are experiencing serious symptoms (difficulty breathing) call 911. If being transported, notify in advance the receiving medical provider and transporter of the potential concern for COVID-19.

If the consumer/customer is arriving for a scheduled appointment, front desk staff will immediately advise the clinician assigned to see the individual, and management staff. The individual will be assess for crisis/safety needs, and if able to return home will be advised to do so. It will also be recommended they contact their primary care physician and IDPH for further direction and to consult about their situation and possible assessment of risk factors. The assigned clinician will advise the consumer they may provide telephonic services until the point in time the individual is past quarantine timeframe and able to return to face to face services. In the event others may have been exposed, they will be informed and advised to self-quarantine per CDC guidelines.

If an unscheduled visitor enters the facility, they shall politely be instructed to call to schedule an appointment and leave the facility due to health concerns, or if necessary due to presenting symptoms, screen them appropriately with the above three questions before proceeding as will all entering the facility.

* If after this screening, the unscheduled visitor answers “yes” to any of the questions as outlined above, we shall request they postpone their visit by 14 days and/or complete their by telephone.
* If necessary, a referral to the nearest emergency room or evaluation will be made.
* The individual will be instructed to notify the receiving provider and transporter in advance of potential concern of COVID-19

**As an organization, The Helen Wheeler Center is proactively implementing activities and guidance to prevent exposure by implementing the following guidelines and practices:**

We have implemented the initial three question screening process prior to a consumer or guest enters the facility as noted above. .

Actively encouraging sick employees to stay home:

* If you have symptoms of acute respiratory illness it is recommended to stay home until you are free of fever (100.4F) for at least 24 hours.
* Make sure that your client schedule is put into the CIS system for the next 30 days so that in the event you are absent from work for an extended period, or are faced with the required 14 day quarantine period, on-site staff will have access to your client schedule.
* Per agency Policies and Procedures, notify your supervisor of your illness and the front desk so they may contact your clients to cancel scheduled appointments.
* Keep in regular contact with your supervisor as to the status of your health.

Encourage your sick clients to stay home:

* In the event you have a client arrive for their appointment and they appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (cough, shortness of breath), or they become sick during their visit, they should be separated from others and be sent home immediately. All individuals should go through the three question process as outlined above prior to entering the facility. They should be immediately be given a mask to cover their mouth/nose to limit exposure to others. Masks may be found in the cabinets in the kitchenette area, above the sick in the employee kitchen, and the main lobby at the front desk. Sick persons should always cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with a tissue (and dispose of it immediately) or an elbow or shoulder, and perform hand hygiene immediately following.
* Clinical staff are encouraged to make calls to all scheduled consumers in advance of their appointments as appointment reminders, and to evaluate their health status as to attend a face-to-face session. In making this call, the clinical staff may ask the three questions stated above which are posted at the front entrance location, so as to be proactive and eliminate having a client arrive at the facility symptomatic.
* If a consumer is unable to attend a face-to-face session, the clinical staff shall reach out to the consumer and may perform clinical interventions telephonically.

Education for staff and consumers:

* Signage has been placed throughout the entire facility for both staff and consumer benefit, containing information on proper personal hygiene including cough and sneeze etiquette, proper handwashing, as well as COVID-19 specific information. Signage included CDC approved flyers, English and Spanish, to educate consumers and staff on the importance of hand washing and staying home when sick.
* Based on CDC recommendations, staff are encouraged to wash their hands frequently using CDC recommended techniques, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands; avoid close contact with others who are sick, stay home when they or a family member are sick, cover cough and sneezes with a flexed elbow or tissue then dispose of tissue immediately.
* Based on CDC recommendations, staff are encouraged to regularly clean and wipe down their workstation, including but not limited to their desk/flat surfaces, telephone, computer and keyboard; and spray disinfectant and/or wipe down with furniture and other items used by consumers following each session.
* Updates will be provided to staff on a regular basis as new information becomes available from the local health department and CDC. All staff have been provided with online links to both departments.

Crisis team services/services provided off-site:

* Due to the closure of schools, crisis team staff shall not be requested to perform services at a school location until further notice.
* If requested to perform a screening at residential or group home site, the clinician should as the 3 questions listed above.
	+ If a yes response is given to question 1 or 2, the clinician should assess for the immediate risk/safety risks/suicidal risks, and potential need to conduct the screening at an alternate location, or assess with the site requesting the screen if they can provide a safe location at their site to conduct the screen. Also, if necessary, the medical professional of the provider requesting the screen should be consulted.
	+ The consumer and others present should be instructed to use a mask and place themselves in a separate room with the door closed if possible, and get assessed by a medical professional immediately before any visitation arrangements are made.
	+ A safe location should be provided to perform the pre-screen by the requesting site.
* If the consumer of family/caretaker responds “yes” to question 1 or 2 and 3:
	+ Instruct the symptomatic consumer/caretaker to use a mask, place themselves in a separate room with the door closed if possible, and get assessed by a medical professional immediately before any visitation arrangements are made.
	+ In all circumstances above, instruct the consumer/caretaker to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of the potential concern for COVID-19.

Contact the locate IDPH program to report any possible cases or discuss any concerns.

Protocols and procedures shall be updated as the DCD, NIH, IL Department of Public Health and the Kankakee Department of Public Health provide direction moving forward.

This shall be updated as current information and guidance becomes available from the appropriate oversight and governing bodies.