



The COVID-19 Mental Health Toolkit

*Helping Renal Professionals
Support the Well-Being
of the ESRD Community*



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I. Introduction

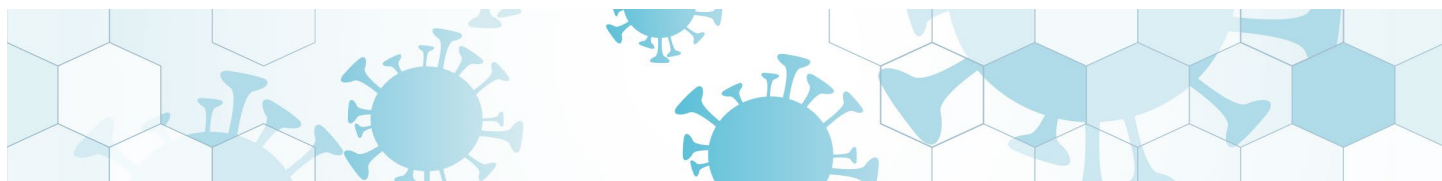
A. The Impact of COVID-19

The Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has been a time filled with uncertainty and many unknowns. The end stage renal disease (ESRD) community has been affected in complex ways and presented with unique challenges.

These have been challenging times for everyone. Feelings of stress or anxiety are common responses to the ongoing pandemic and can affect anyone. Neither patients nor professionals are immune to the effects of a nationwide pandemic. There is no right way to respond to a crisis; reactions may include sadness, grief, or worry. In these stressful times, it is important to process all emotions and fears with positive coping styles to preserve a healthy and resilient self. Taking care of yourself is the critical first step to be able to give back and help support loved ones, friends, neighbors, and our communities. There is always hope and the ability to thrive during uncertain and stressful times.

B. What Is a Toolkit? Who Should Use This Toolkit?

A “toolkit” provides tools, guidance and resources. These materials bring together knowledge from subject matters expert organizations in one place as the community copes with the effects of COVID-19. This toolkit can be used by any renal professional including the ESRD Networks, dialysis providers, and transplant programs. It was developed in conjunction with input and feedback from ESRD Network professionals and patient subject matter experts. The hope is that by informing themselves, sharing the resources, and managing their own well-being they can make a difference in the lives of the ESRD patients and families they serve. It is not intended to be given directly to patients, but instead by professionals to use in their work. There are four key topics in this toolkit describing actions that patients and providers can take to improve their well-being and maintain a healthy lifestyle.



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C. How to Get Started

This toolkit is meant to provide relevant and credible information related to many aspects of mental health and wellness. It does not need to be read front to back like a book, but rather is meant to be useful by individual sections based on the need of the reader. We encourage you to review and share the Mental Health Toolkit with others in your community.

There are four key topics: **increasing awareness, building community capacity, incorporating telemedicine, and getting ahead of the issues.** Each of the four key topics has additional sub-themes.

The resources are organized by topic area. Each resource entry follows this form:

Example

Topic Sub-Category	General Mental Health	Title of and Hyperlink to Resource	social well-being of an individual, which can affect how the person thinks, feels, and behaves.
Audience(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coping with Fear and Sadness During a Pandemic. This PDF guide from Hofstra University summarizes many common “pandemic-related” issues and how they trigger increased anxiety and depression with helpful solutions to best manage negative reactions to each.		
<p>“All” indicates the resource applies to every audience.</p>		<p>“Staff” includes any healthcare professional who serves patients with ESRD. These are appropriate for all roles.</p>	
		Description of Resource	



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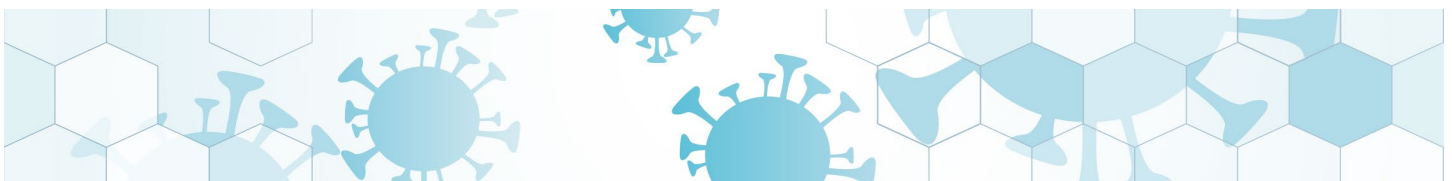


D. Take Action

Being aware is the first step, but it is not enough to just be aware. Everyone in the renal community must take action if we are to truly support individual and community resilience.

There are many ways for Networks, providers, and professionals to share and employ the resources in this toolkit. The resources come in a variety of formats that allow for wide distribution. Below are some suggestions; this is not an exhaustive list. Some are actions that patients can take in their community and as they interface with other patients. Implementation should be tailored by the organization, the resources available and to the intended audience with the desired outcome in mind.

Resource Format	Ways to Share
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use social media to promote the website address• Add a tagline and the website address to all fax cover pages• Link from the resource website from your site• Ask patient groups on Facebook to share the website
PDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Construct an email campaign and attach the PDF or link to it• Share the PDF link on social media• Distribute copies of the PDF materials to share with patient representatives• Create an Instagram account to share videos and pictures of resources• Promote in a newsletter, if applicable• Ask that patients share the resource and talking points during Lobby Days• Distribute to local libraries in a targeted area• Share with community groups, such as church or civic groups
Recorded Webinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote the recording availability in a newsletter, if applicable• Add information about the recording availability to the survey link of the event evaluation
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share in social media campaigns, including Instagram• Add to your Network YouTube Channel, if applicable• Upload the video to a DVD and select facilities to test it in their patient orientation or training• Request time on local public broadcasting system (PBS) TV or radio to share the video as a public service announcement or request an interview to discuss the toolkit availability and importance.

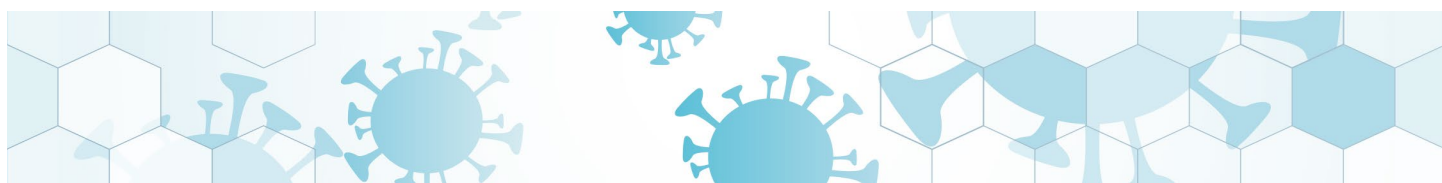


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Resource Format	Ways to Share
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share in social media campaigns, including Instagram • Add to your Network YouTube Channel, if applicable • Upload the video to a DVD and select facilities to test it in their patient orientation or training • Request time on local public broadcasting system (PBS) TV or radio to share the video as a public service announcement or request an interview to discuss the toolkit availability and importance.
Resource Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the material with local chapters of stakeholder organizations (e.g., American Nephrology Nurse Association [ANNA], National Association of Nephrology Technician [NANT], National Kidney Foundation [NKF]) • Employ in quality improvement projects • Display on running banner feature on Network website
Playbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a webinar with the targeted audience to introduce the playbook and how to use it; invite organizations that created playbook to co-present. • Construct a hold message for phone lines that advertise the recorded webinars, along with other related resources.
Infographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a poster from the infographic; share with patient groups, facilities, and transplant centers in the service area • Use the infographic in reporting • Spread the infographic via social media • Convert the infographic to an animated video
Factsheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print and mail to facilities • Advertise availability to download from the website during other communications • Construct a tagline for Listserv emails • Distribute among local community social events, church events, and kidney-based support groups • Share with targeted nephrology groups and/or primary care groups to make the factsheet available in waiting rooms • Partner with social worker programs, nephrology fellowships, and dialysis technical programs to distribute • Share and discuss the factsheet at local support groups



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Resource Format	Ways to Share
Checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include the checklist as part of new patient orientation, patient transitions to new treatment options, and annual assessments• Share in facility and transplant center Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) meetings• Educate facility staff on use of the checklist as part of monthly patient education• Ask that peer mentors share with mentees
App	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pilot the app with a select group• Market the app availability in newsletter, if applicable, and to patient advisory committee (PAC) members, during Medical Review Board and Board of Director meetings• Partner with source to promote the app during conferences and other meetings• Educate facility patient representatives (FPRs) on the app; ask them to show other patients and staff at the facility
Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Request engaged professionals in service area share the article with colleagues• Share the article with stakeholders; ask them to share the article in their blogs, on social media, and in member newsletters

E. Note for Social Workers

At the dialysis and transplant program level, social workers are privy to more confidential patient information from implementing such things as the Kidney Disease Quality of Life Instrument (KDQOL), depression screening, symptom targeted interventions, and through other trusted conversations. Social workers are encouraged to use the resources in this toolkit to address individualized needs that have been identified. The resources can support the intervention plans based upon the screening.



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II. Overview

A. Increasing Awareness

- Recognize the possible impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health.
- Educate everyone; do not presume who may or may not be affected.
- Share resources widely among professionals and patients.



B. Building Community Capacity

- Train all dialysis facility staff for patient and professional benefit.
- Address staff burden and potential for burnout.
- Provide specifics of self-care behavior.



C. Incorporating Telemedicine

- Learn the telemedicine regulations.
- Connect individuals with telemedicine for mental health concerns.
- Find opportunities and address challenges of telemedicine and mental health.



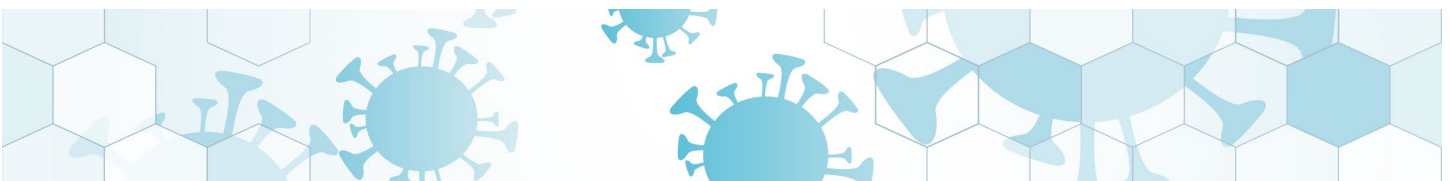
D. Getting Ahead of the Issues

- Being proactive is the best approach to mental health issues.
- Recognize that dialysis patients are already at a higher risk for depression and anxiety.
- Teach and learn coping skills; reduce the stigma of mental health needs.



Telehealth is different from telemedicine because it refers to a broader scope of remote healthcare services than telemedicine.¹ In this toolkit, we will use both terms to include all possibilities.

¹ HealthIT.gov. What is telehealth? How does it differ from telemedicine? Accessed on July 27, 2020. Available at <https://www.healthit.gov/faq/what-telehealth-how-telehealth-different-telemedicine>.



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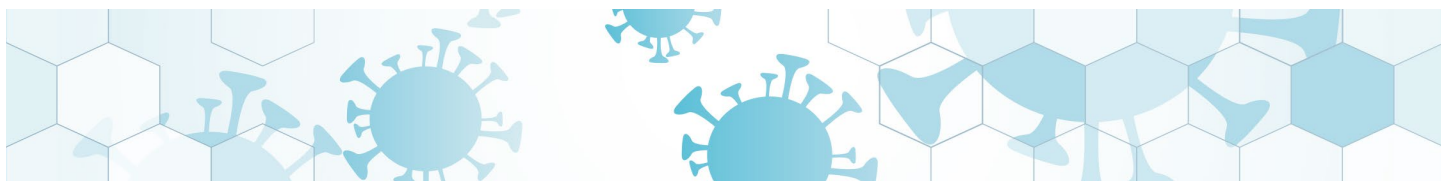
III. Topic Areas

A. Increasing Awareness

Before something can be addressed it must first be recognized. Therefore, when looking at the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, the first step is to be aware that the COVID-19 pandemic may negatively influence one’s mental health. How or who it may affect should not be presumed, making it imperative that everyone be educated about the possible impact of this pandemic on their mental health. Feelings of loss, sadness, anxiety, and frustration can be expected to be felt across the community by patients, professionals, and caregivers. Sharing these resources widely can help make anyone feel like it is okay to speak up.



<p>Patients and Staff</p>	<p>General Mental Health is the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of an individual, which can affect how the person thinks, feels, and behaves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coping with Fear and Sadness During a Pandemic. This PDF guide from Hofstra University summarizes many common “pandemic-related” issues and how they trigger increased anxiety and depression with helpful solutions to best manage negative reactions to each.• The National Forum of ESRD Networks' Dialysis Patient Depression Toolkit. This toolkit, well-respected by many ESRD patients, offers a non-judgmental discussion of the emotional demands of dialysis along with straight-forward information on when and how to seek help from a mental health professional.• Dialysis Mental Health Toolkit. This guide, developed by an ESRD Network, provides an overview of mental health disorders as a reference or as an introduction to the topic. It also provides information on the benefits of self-care for patients and an interactive worksheet that can help patients identify their social support network.
<p>Patients and Staff</p>	<p>Coping & Stress Management is the process by which a person consciously attempts thoughts aimed at minimizing negative emotions associated stressors and life changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resources for Emotional Support and Well-Being. This webpage, published by the California Department of Public Health, provides a list of useful national and California state-specific hotline telephone numbers.• 5 Things You Should Know About Stress. This factsheet from the National Institute of Mental Health describes five things to know about stress and includes links to useful and related resources.

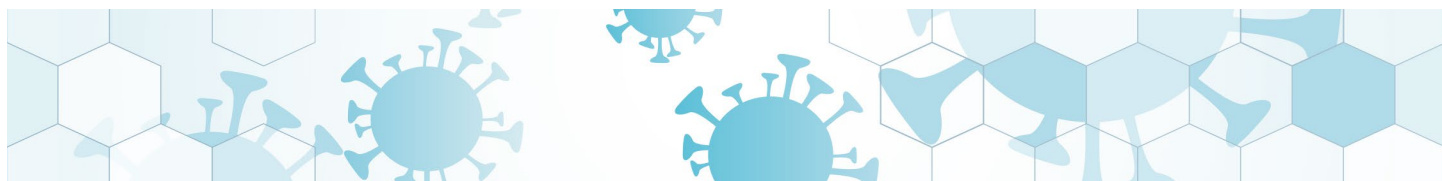


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Caregivers	<p>Caregivers refers to anyone who provides care for another person to help with activities of daily living, including bathing, shopping (e.g., groceries, medications), cooking, managing finances, housework, and transportation. Caregivers are usually members of the person’s social network and can include a spouse, family member, friend, neighbor, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 Tips for Family Caregivers. This infographic, developed by the Caregiver Action Network (CAN), contains 10 useful tips for caregivers, such as seeking support, self-care, accepting offers, communicating effectively, signs of depression, technology, organizing medical information, and legal documentation.
Staff	<p>Grief & Loss is the process of reacting to the loss (e.g., death) of a loved one. Emotional reactions of grief can include anger, guilt, anxiety, sadness, and despair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grief and COVID-19: Saying Goodbye in the Age of Physical Distancing. This American Psychological Association article briefly describes the changing ways people mourn their loved ones in the age of social distancing due to COVID-19 and differentiates prolonged grief from depression.



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B. Building Community Capacity

Growing the community’s ability to take on mental health issues begins by training professional staff about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on a person’s mental health due to stress, worry, loss of a loved one, job loss, etc. The pandemic also has created new barriers for those with pre-existing mental health issues. It is important for healthcare providers to evaluate and address staff burden and potential for burnout. These resources provide general information about mental health, coping/stress management, and self-care.



Staff	<p>General Mental Health encompasses the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of an individual, which can affect how the person thinks, feels, and behaves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• COVID Ready Communication Playbook. This playbook, produced by VitalTalk, provides practical advice on how to talk about some difficult topics related to COVID-19.• Training and Technical Assistance Related to COVID-19. This resource guide, prepared by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), highlights products and resources that can be useful when coping with the effects of widespread public health crises, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Psychosocial Impacts of Disasters: Assisting Community Leaders— Supportive Practices for Mental Health Professionals During Pandemic-Related Social Distancing• Dialysis Mental Health Toolkit. This toolkit, developed by an ESRD Network, has detailed information on mental health disorder classifications and care planning, including a patient-facing social support survey.
Staff	<p>Coping & Stress Management is the process by which a person consciously attempts thoughts aimed at minimizing negative emotions associated with stressors and life changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responding to COVID-19. The Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network (MHTTC) prepared this website, which highlights various MHTTC products and resources, including webinars to help healthcare providers cope with the effects of widespread public health crises, such as COVID-19, mental health disparities, and telehealth. Some webinars offer continuing education credits.• Tips for Community Members COVID-19: Coping as the Pandemic Continues. This is a compilation of lessons learned from the Institute for Disaster Mental Health (IDMH) of earlier experiences during various phases of a disaster such as a pandemic.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19. This CDC site has topic overviews from healthy ways to cope to additional national resources applicable to staff mental health as they support patients.• Coalition for Supportive Care of Kidney Patients' Maintaining Emotional Balance in an Unbalancing Time. This slide presentation provides sample tactics and wording for professional staff to help patients through the pandemic by acknowledging fear and anxiety, recognizing the dialysis center as a source of stability, and honoring those lost to the pandemic.
Staff	<p>Self-care includes activities deliberately chosen to take care of one's mental, emotional, and physical health. An effective self-care routine can lessen anxiety and improve overall mood. Performing acts of self-care may be simple things and can be easily overlooked during stressful times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustaining the Well-Being of Healthcare Personnel during Coronavirus and other Infectious Disease Outbreaks. This one-page resource, developed by the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS), provides helpful strategies for practicing self-care to sustain the ability to care for those in need.• Mini Modules to Relieve Stress for Healthcare Workers Responding to COVID-19: Creating a Practical Self-Care Plan in Difficult Times. This webinar, produced by CSTS, offers practical steps for creating a self-care plan in difficult times.• COVID-19 Sleep Checklist: Healthcare Workers and First Responders. This checklist, prepared by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, provides recommendations for sleep and fatigue management during high-intensity periods of work as a result of COVID-19.• Self-Care During the Coronavirus Pandemic. This National Association of Social Workers webpage contains useful resources to improve and increase self-care practices.• Self-Compassion Webcast Series for Professionals in Education. This is a series of 12 self-compassion webinars produced by the South-Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center that teaches how to care for yourself in the moment. Research has shown that those who are more self-compassionate experience less stress, anxiety, and depression, are more resilient, and better able to deal with emotional challenges.• Wound Care for Burnout. This ESRD Network video presentation discusses how to know the signs of staff burnout and tools to address them right away.



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C. Incorporating Telemedicine

Due to COVID-19, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) revised telemedicine regulations as of April 29, 2020. Medicare currently covers many different types of telemedicine care, including doctors, nurse practitioners, psychologists, and licensed clinical social workers who treat mental health conditions. *For the most up-to-date telehealth regulations, please visit www.cms.gov.*



Telehealth is different from telemedicine because it refers to a broader scope of remote healthcare services than telemedicine.² In this toolkit, we will use both terms to include all possibilities.

Staff	<p>Regulations and Policies related to telemedicine have changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to stay current.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• April 2020 Interim Final Rule: Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Policy and Regulatory Revisions in Response to the COVID-19 Public. This CMS Interim Final Rule includes multiple waivers to provide flexibility (e.g., geographic location, type of health site) during the pandemic and granting payment parity between telemedicine and in-person clinical care for Medicare providers and beneficiaries.• COVID-19 Emergency Declaration Blanket Waivers for Health Care Providers. This is a factsheet that summarizes the CMS-issued waivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.• CMS List of Telehealth Services. This is a downloadable, compressed file containing two Excel workbooks that provide a listing of services payable under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule when furnished via telemedicine.
Staff	<p>Implementation Resources and Best Practices are now available from government agencies and expert organizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using Telehealth to Expand Access to Essential Health Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This guidance by the CDC describes the landscape of telemedicine services and includes considerations for healthcare systems, practices, and providers using telehealth services to provide virtual care during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. This website includes telehealth-specific information, such as available modalities, benefits, potential uses, strategies to increase uptake, reimbursement, safeguards, and potential limitations.

² HealthIT.gov. What is telehealth? How does it differ from telemedicine? Accessed on July 27, 2020. Available at <https://www.healthit.gov/faq/what-telehealth-how-telehealth-different-telemedicine>.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telehealth Resources for Behavior Health Clinicians During COVID-19. This two-page handout produced by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Preparedness & Response (ASPR), the Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange (TRACIE), identifies key resources for behavioral health clinicians, includes hyperlinks for SAMSHA’s response to Mental Health and COVID-19, and details the CMS transition to telehealth. Clinicians are encouraged to keep up to date with new guidance and best practice requirements as the pandemic unfolds. • The American Telehealth Association (ATA) Quick-Start Guide to Telehealth During a Health Crisis. This guide is offered by the ATA and was created to serve as a resource for providers looking to quickly establish telehealth services during a public health crisis in response to COVID-19. To obtain a copy, you must provide your contact information to download the resource. It includes technology, clinical, financial, presentation, communication, and metric considerations for implementing telehealth services. • ESRD Provider Telehealth and Telemedicine Tool Kit. This CMS document contains electronic links to reliable sources of information regarding telehealth and telemedicine. Most of the information is directed toward providers who may want to establish a permanent telemedicine program. There are specific documents identified that will be useful in choosing telemedicine vendors, initiating a telemedicine program, monitoring patients remotely, and developing documentation tools.
<p style="text-align: center;">Staff</p>	<p>Overcoming challenges to telemedicine use in mental health is possible with preparation and effective communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considerations for the Care and Treatment of Mental and Substance Use Disorders in the COVID-19 Epidemic (Revised May 7, 2020). This SAMSHA press release discusses telehealth and mental health-related considerations during the COVID-19 epidemic. • The Use of Telehealth Within Behavioral Health Settings: Utilization, Opportunities, and Challenge. The National Council in partnership with the University of Michigan’s Behavioral Health Workforce Research Center (BHWRC) conducted a research study to better understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The utilization patterns and types of telehealth tools being used — Barriers to using telehealth — Providers’ perceptions and attitudes toward telemedicine <p>This report summarizes the finding of the study including the impact that telemedicine could have on access to behavioral health services in rural communities and addresses workforce shortages.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Patients</p>	<p>Information on Receiving Services for patients and caregivers to ease their transition to receiving telemedicine services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient & Family Centered Care Partners Virtual Visit Patient Guide. This resource available in English and Spanish includes a Virtual Visit Appointment Checklist for patients.

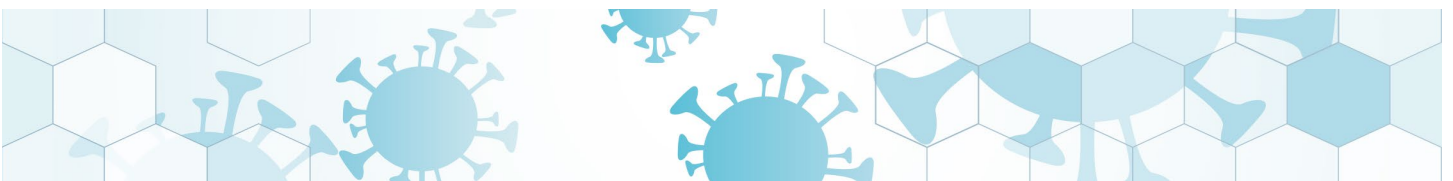


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- [Medicare Coverage for Outpatient Mental Health Services.](#) This site lists the Medicare Part B covered outpatient mental health services, provides things to know before going, and provides links to other government agencies.
- [ESRD NCC's Kidney Patient Care: Your Guide to Using Telemedicine.](#) This resource covers how kidney patients can access telemedicine, an overview of technology and apps needed, and tips to troubleshoot and prepare for telemedicine appointments.



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D. Getting Ahead of the Issues

It is imperative to take action when one's mental health is impacted. It is as important to address the population and situation proactively to avoid or attenuate the negative effect on one's mental health. People with kidney disease undergoing dialysis have demanding treatment schedules and a higher rate of depression than those transplanted.³ The rate of anxiety among people with ESRD is an average prevalence rate of 38 percent (ranging from 12 percent to 52 percent).⁴ Adding the impact of COVID-19 and its effects on a population already at a higher risk of mental health issues highlights the need for a proactive approach. The community should encourage stress reduction, promote positive coping skills, and reduce the stigma of seeking professional help.



Patients and Staff	<p>Coping & Stress Management is the process by which a person consciously attempts thoughts aimed at minimizing negative emotions associated with stressors and life changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• California Surgeon General's Playbook: Stress Relief during COVID-19. This is a playbook or guide from the State of California, Office of the Surgeon General, which provides information about six stress-busting strategies: Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, staying connected to our social supports, and getting mental healthcare.• Coronavirus (COVID-19): Resources for Managing Stress. This useful webpage from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) provides stress-related management tips for a variety of individuals.• Coping with Stress During the 2019-nCoV Outbreak. This infographic from the World Health Organization (WHO) describes six useful tips on how to cope with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.
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³ N. Bates, J. Schell, A. Jordan. Depression and Anxiety in ESRD: A Practical Guide for Nephrologists. *Kidney News*. Accessed on July 27, 2020. Available at https://www.kidneynews.org/kidneynews/9_9/12/12.pdf.

⁴ D. Cukor, N. Ver Halen, Y. Fruchter. Anxiety and Quality of Life in ESRD. *Seminars in Dialysis*. 26(3): 265–268. Accessed on July 27, 2020. Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/sdi.12065>.



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IV. Collaboration and Conclusion

To further complement this toolkit and inspire collaboration, the following steps are recommended:

- Connect with the ESRD NCC and ESRD Networks on social media.
- Check out CDC, WHO, and SAMSHA websites often and sign up for their newsletters to stay up to date with the most current information.
- Email NCCinfo@hsag.com with comments, suggestions, and success stories from your service area.

This toolkit is a living document that will be updated as new information and issues come to light as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves and resolves. The ESRD NCC will be updating the electronic copy at <https://esrdncc.org/en/resources/professionals/>. If you have a printed copy, check that it is the latest version. If not, go to the above web address to download and/or print the most recent version.

Document History

Version	Date	Notes
1.0	7/2020	First publication

 nccinfo@hsag.com |  844.472.4250 |   

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