Meeting Mental Health Needs of Rural Persons during the Global Health Pandemic

Shawnda Schroeder, PhD
Associate Director of Research and Evaluation
Research Associate Professor
Center for Rural Health
Shawnda.Schroeder@UND.edu

Established in 1980, at The University of North Dakota (UND) School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Grand Forks, ND
One of the country’s most experienced state rural health offices
UND Center of Excellence in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity
Home to seven national programs
Recipient of the UND Award for Departmental Excellence in Research

Focus on
– Educating and Informing
– Policy
– Research and Evaluation
– Working with Communities
– American Indians
– Health Workforce
– Hospitals and Facilities

ruralhealth.und.edu
In rural areas with surging COVID-19 cases, masks are rare and concern levels low

'Our neighbors, our family members': Small-town hospitals overwhelmed by COVID-19 deaths

Ken Alltucker, USA TODAY
Published 3:40 a.m. ET Nov. 15, 2020 | Updated 7:57 a.m. ET Nov. 16, 2020

Covid-19 Hits Rural Nursing Homes, Which Are Among Those Least Equipped to Fight It

Staffers follow recommended precautions, but coronavirus spread like wildfire, administrator said

Notes
Deaths marked as unknown were uncategorized as of the time the U.S. crossed 100,000 deaths.
Source: Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Credit: Sean McMinn/NPR
New reported cases by day in the United States, 7-day average

Note: Rural areas are those counties located outside of metropolitan areas, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service. They may include small cities and towns.

New reported deaths by day in the United States, 7-day average

Note: Rural areas are those counties located outside of metropolitan areas, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service. They may include small cities and towns.
Where new deaths are increasing
Charts show daily deaths per capita and are on the same scale. States are sorted by deaths per capita for the most recent day. Tap a state to see detailed map page.

Where new cases are higher and staying high
States where new cases are higher had a daily average of at least 15 new cases per 100,000 people over the past week. Charts show daily cases per capita and are on the same scale. Tap a state to see detailed map page.

AP Grand Forks Herald
Rural schools stressed; teachers 'starting to drown' across North Dakota
Severe staffing shortages due to quarantines and community spread of COVID-19 threaten to force schools, both rural and urban, away from ... 

Nurses say ND's response to COVID-19 'is a dumpster fire'
North Dakota nurses are hitting their breaking points as COVID-19 continues to surge through the state.

USA TODAY
The Dakotas are 'as bad as it gets anywhere in the world' for COVID-19
North and South Dakota face a tragic reality in coronavirus cases that health experts say could have been largely prevented with earlier action.

In North And South Dakota, Hospitals Are Overloaded: Shots - Health News
Faced with overloaded hospitals, doctors in South Dakota and North Dakota struggle to deal with uncontrolled community spread of COVID-19 ...
Mental Health Care BEFORE the Pandemic

- Already in a place of crisis (depression, anxiety, illicit drug use, and suicide rates increasing).
- Opioid pandemic.
- Provider shortages (for all licenses mental health professionals).
- Stigma among providers, self-stigma, community stigma.
- Growing inequities by geography, race, age, sexual orientation, gender, and insurance status.
- Low utilization (provider and consumer) of virtual visits (tele-mental health) and low reimbursements rates (if any at all) for virtual care.

Mental Health Care NOW

- Fewer providers working, or working fewer hours.
- Increased need and demand for services which impacts availability.
- CDC guidelines influencing how in-person visits need to occur and time spent with patient(s) virtually which impacts availability.
- Not recognize symptoms as a mental health concern, but result of quarantine or physical distancing.
- May downplay feelings and concerns.
NEED is Evident

**The Washington Post**

*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

The coronavirus pandemic is pushing America into a mental health crisis

Anxiety and depression are rising. The U.S. is ill-prepared, with some clinics already on the brink of collapse.

---

**International Journal of Mental Health Systems**

**COMMENTS**

**Open Access**

Mental health and psychosocial well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: the invisible elephant in the room

Akaninyene Otu, Carlo Handy, Charles, and Sanni Yaya

**AJPH**

**COVID-19 Exposes the Cracks in Our Already Fragile Mental Health System**

John Auerbach MBA, and Benjamin F. Miller PsyD

American Journal of Public Health, 08 Apr 2020, e1-e2
DOI: 10.2105/ajph.2020.305699  PMID: 32271609
Calls to US helpline jump 891%, as White House is warned of mental health crisis
Some federal officials worry the U.S. isn’t prepared to meet nation’s needs.

Are crisis lines meeting new mental health needs?
So far, yes, though that might change as the pandemic continues, psychologists say.

Crisis counselors, the ‘paramedics of mental health,’ wage a wrenching battle on the coronavirus front lines

RISKS OF PANDEMIC
- Economic Recovery
- Unemployment
- Isolation

TARGET PROBLEMS
- Drug use
- Alcohol abuse
- Suicide

Opportunities

Increased attention around mental health (and tele-mental health care) need among new groups, including:

- Media
- Schools
- Primary care
- Parents
- Funding agencies
- Not-for-profits
- Long-term care

- Payers
- Federal government
- Policy makers
- Clergy
- Primary care
- Agricultural groups
- Public health

Local and Statewide Response: North Dakota
Behavioral Health Bridge

Supports for our communities

The Behavioral Health Bridge is powered by a partnership between Sanford Health and the University of North Dakota. The purpose of the Behavioral Health Bridge is to provide information on common behavioral health conditions and launch virtual behavioral health treatments to address the current needs of people in our community.

Partnership

Beginning in March of 2020, a team of individuals with experience in psychiatry, bio-behavioral research, rural health equity, social work, behavioral health workforce development, and behavioral health stigma began to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the behavioral health of North Dakota residents.

A Work in Progress

The content on this website is a first step in providing reliable, valid, and useful information about various elements of behavioral health. However, like many other aspects of our life during the current COVID-19 pandemic, information about behavioral health is constantly changing and developing. Please check this site regularly for new information and helpful resources.

COVID-19 Behavioral Health Modules

There is a growing need for scientifically and clinically valid information to assist the public in gaining awareness of potential behavioral health issues in the current pandemic. This includes information on how to manage stress effectively and seek behavioral health assistance when needed. We understand that members of our community are being bombarded with information coming from a variety of different sources. The following information, which has been collected by trained members of our partnership team, is meant to provide members of our community with reliable information, tips, and resources for managing behavioral health concerns during (and following) the COVID-19 pandemic.

Behavioral Health: Impact of COVID-19

Stress & Coping: Coping with Stress, Worry, Grief, and Loss

Caring: Self-Care and Caring for Loved Ones

Support & Treatment: Considerations, Need, and Behavioral Health Resources

Healthcare Providers: COVID-19 and Behavioral Health

behavioralhealthbridge.org
Next Stage of the Behavioral Health Bridge

- Access to self-administered, interactive, mental health screening tools (evidence-based)
  - Depression
  - Alcohol use
  - Illicit drug use
  - Anxiety
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Connection to tele-mental health
- Q&A with a behavioral health clinician
Mental Health Technology Transfer Centers

- Years of research and knowledge of evidence-based practices show that well-designed mental health prevention, treatment, and recovery support efforts are effective and can have multiple benefits for individuals with mental disorders.
- The purpose of the MHTTC Network is technology transfer - disseminating and implementing evidence-based practices for mental disorders into the field.
- Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the MHTTC Network includes 10 Regional Centers, a National American Indian and Alaska Native Center, a National Hispanic and Latino Center, and a Network Coordinating Office.
Collaborative COVID-19 Response

• Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)
  • Building Telehealth Capacity: mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/telehealth-resources
• Mid-America MHTTC and Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC)
  • TLC Tuesdays: mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/telehealth-resources
• MHTTC National Coordinating Office
  • Responding to COVID-19: mhttcnetwork.org/centers/global-mhttc/responding-covid-19

Sample: MHTTC COVID-19 Resources

• Mental Health Resources for College and University Faculty and Staff to Support Student Mental Health During COVID-19
• Mental Health Resources for K-12 Educators During COVID-19
• Mental Health Resources for Parents and Caregivers During COVID-19
• Telehealth Learning and Consultation (TLC) Tuesdays
• Session one: Changing the Conversation about Mental Health to Support College Students During a Pandemic
• Session two: Campus Mental Health: How do we Come Back to the New Normal?
• Tips for Educators: Supporting Parents During this Pandemic
• Psychosocial Impacts of Disasters: Assisting Community Leaders
Sample: MHTTC COVID-19 Resources

- Farm Stress: Facts, Impact of COVID-19, and Resource and Training Needs of Mental Health Care Providers
- Student Mental Health During COVID-19: How to Prepare as Schools Reopen
- Self-Care Through the Summer
- Resources for Primary Care Providers Experiencing Stress Related to COVID-19 or Other Health Care Crises
- Telehealth Learning and Consultation (TLC) Tuesdays Webinar Series
- Telehealth Toolbox for School Personnel
- HHS Region 7 COVID-19 Resources

Sample: MHTTC COVID-19 Resources

- Responding to COVID-19 | Grief, Loss, and Bereavement
- Responding to COVID-19 | Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Child Abuse
- Responding to COVID-19 | Mental Health Disparities
- Responding to COVID-19 | School Mental Health
- Responding to COVID-19 | Telehealth
Sample: MHTTC COVID-19 Resources

- **Responding to COVID-19 | Grief, Loss, and Bereavement**
- **Responding to COVID-19 | Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Child Abuse**
- **Responding to COVID-19 | Mental Health Disparities**
- **Responding to COVID-19 | School Mental Health**
- **Responding to COVID-19 | Telehealth**

Summary

- Mental health care access was a concern prior to the pandemic for all demographic groups.
- Mental health inequities have been exasperated by the pandemic.
- Providers and community groups are in need of additional training on how to address growing mental health needs through collaboration.
- New community groups are eager to learn more about how they can collaborate to address mental health concerns:
  - Media
  - Schools
  - Primary care
  - Parents
  - Primary care
  - Payers
  - Federal government
  - Policy makers
  - Clergy
  - Agricultural groups
  - Funding agencies
  - Not-for-profits
  - Long-term care
  - Public health
Shawnda Schroeder, PhD, MA

Associate Director of Research and Evaluation
Research Associate Professor
Center for Rural Health
University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences
701-777-3848 main | shawnda.schroeder@und.edu

My pronouns are she, her, and hers

Contact us for more information!

501 North Columbia Road, Stop 9037
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202-9037
701.777.0787 • ruralhealth.und.edu