



Coronavirus Impact on Side by Side Programs

June 22, 2020

Even with shelter-in-place restrictions for California starting to lift, life continues to be challenging and stressful for everyone on so many levels. Canceled plans, lay-offs and slowdowns are negatively impacting so many of our friends and loved ones. At Side by Side, as a first responder in terms of mental health and a provider of essential services, we are endeavoring to offer the maximum assistance that we can to the vulnerable young people we serve and our larger community.

However, we still face financial challenges that include reductions in expected revenue from canceled fundraising events and billing uncertainties due to necessary changes in our program services. As a result of the shutdown, some clients lack basic human needs and many more don't have the necessary technology or internet access to maintain mental health services remotely. Please consider contributing online to Side by Side's Relief Fund at SidebySideYouth.org/donate.

Side by Side is doing the utmost we can to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus, while meeting the needs of our clients and their families.

- To the fullest extent possible, we are maintaining continuity of service for our clients through phone or video sessions and electronic educational instruction. **Some in-person meetings with clients at their home or at our offices are cautiously being resumed (as described below), though maintaining rigorous safety protocols. In any case where a client or family member is ill, phone or video sessions will be used in place of in-person visits.**
- Our staff and clinicians are all following the California Department of Public Health and CDC recommendations including hygiene, social distancing, and staying home when sick.
- Office locations are cleaned throughout the day and extra cleaning has been scheduled for all locations.
- All administrative staff able to work remotely are doing so and all non-essential in-person meetings continue to be suspended.

Due to differences in our program services, please note the following program-specific information about closures and services provided:

- **Community Counseling** – Marin, Alameda, Sonoma, and Napa clients are still being served through phone and video sessions, and socially distant in-person visits are also being reintroduced on a more regular basis in the North Bay.
- **Irene M. Hunt School** – Hunt School will be piloting onsite summer instruction for some students over the summer while following current Marin County health guidelines. Staff is developing a plan for what school life will look like in the fall in accordance with Marin County Office of Education guidelines. Therapeutic services are continuing via TeleHealth sessions complimented by remotely accessed video instruction, as well as in-person sessions for high-needs cases. Staff are actively supporting parents and caregivers as well.
- **Our Space** – Clients are being served via TeleHealth sessions and virtual group drop-in hours. The Queer Love Youth Pride youth cabaret performance is going virtual on Friday, June 26. Please check the Our Space Facebook page (@ourspacebyside) for more information.
- **Real Alternatives** – Youth continue to be supported by their Clinical Case Managers and Youth Specialists via socially distant visits and outings (grocery store, bank, etc.), as well as phone/video sessions.
- **TAY Space** – All full-service clients continue to be served via phone or in-person visits. The TAY Space drop-in center is closed during the shelter-in-place restrictions but staff are available onsite on a limited basis to meet youth needs. Youth should call the office at 415-870-9298 if they need food, support, or housing support.
- **YouThrive** – YouThrive group sessions will be offered virtually throughout the summer, paired on a pilot basis with parent support sessions as well. We are hopeful that when schools resume in the fall, we will be able to offer in-person group sessions for the students.

While this pandemic changes every day, please know Side by Side will continue our unwavering commitment to the young people we serve. In the meantime, do what you can to manage your own stress and anxiety. Don't forget to wash your hands, wear a mask, and remember how important we all are to each other!