



Side by Side Programs in a Pandemic Autumn

Sept 15, 2020

As we move further into the fall season, life continues to be challenging and stressful for everyone on so many levels. The pandemic, wildfires, social unrest in our communities, 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 private funders and billing uncertainties due to necessary changes in our program services. As a result of the shutdown and fires, some clients are struggling to meet basic human needs and new clients may not 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.

All of our programs are continuing to meet the needs of our clients and their families – with some adding new services or engagement efforts. In-person therapeutic sessions with clients are being conducted when possible (described below) though staff maintain rigorous safety protocols and follow social distancing guidelines.

- **Community Counseling** – Clients in Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Napa are being served through a mix of phone, video and in-person sessions. Community Counseling clinicians in the North Bay are also partnering with YouThrive to provide services to YT clients and their families, including a new program for Latinx immigrant youth in Healdsburg.
- **Irene M. Hunt School** – Hunt School reintegrated select students into small classroom cohorts at the beginning of the September (following current State and Marin County health guidelines), while continuing to support the rest of their students with individualized remote learning. When not delivered in person, therapeutic services are being offered via telehealth sessions complimented by remotely accessed video instruction. Staff are also actively supporting families and caregivers.
- **Our Space** – Clients are being served through individual phone and group Zoom sessions. Our Space continues to support homeless LGBTQIA+ youth through housing and food assistance as well. Virtual professional development trainings are available.
- **Real Alternatives** – Youth are being supported via socially distant visits and outings (grocery store, bank, etc.), as well as phone and video sessions case management sessions. Bi-monthly community meetings for all RA youth are also being held.
- **TAY Space** – All full-service clients continue to be served via phone or in-person visits. TAY Space continues to be closed for drop-ins but staff are available onsite on a limited basis to meet youth needs including assistance with food and housing. In place of the daily drop-in sessions, online Zoom gatherings are being offered
- **YouThrive** – With Sonoma and Marin schools both in remote learning mode, YouThrive group sessions started virtually as well on Sept. 14. Bilingual parent support sessions piloted over the summer will continue, as will twice-weekly in-person workout sessions for Petaluma youth at CrossFit Sav-Up. San Rafael and Petaluma clients will be able to access individual counseling sessions through Side by Side's Community Counseling program for additional support. YouThrive will also offer a 6-week workshop in conjunction with College of Marin.

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!