

Victim Service Response Efforts during the COVID-19 Crisis

Since mid-March, our community has been gripped by the effects of social distancing and stay-at-home orders issued to curb the spread of COVID-19.

During these challenging times, many essential victim service organizations and partners have seen requests for services increase, even as future funding remains in doubt. Safe Alliance, our community's nonprofit provider of domestic violence and sexual assault services, has experienced a 45% increase in calls to their hotline during the period. While child abuse referrals to the Department of Social Services are actually down over the same period last year, community partners are already bracing for the fallout associated with increasing referrals that will come when children return to school and begin disclosing the instances of abuse that occurred during quarantine. Pat's Place is already making plans to extend hours indefinitely to accommodate the influx of new cases.

What follows is a brief account of how Pat's Place has adjusted service delivery and outreach/education models to respond effectively during these challenging times:

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, Pat's Place purchased new IT equipment and implemented new technology solutions to enhance the organization's response and therapy services during this critical time.

Forensic Interviews and Medical Exams continue to be offered on site, with focused attention given to those cases deemed most high-risk. The agency has implemented tele-forensic interviews, a process that allows staff to maintain appropriate social distancing and limit exposure to essential staff, partners, children, and their caregivers. Intake staff and family advocates are now working remotely, but continue to engage families by telephone to ensure important information is communicated and that families are given the additional resources needed to help them navigate their next steps.

Individual, group and family therapy is being offered through a new, virtual telehealth platform and more than 95% of appointments are being kept. Additionally, PPCAC continues to contract with outside, qualified therapy providers who are helping child victims of trauma manage stress and cope during these uncertain times. Requests for therapy have more than doubled since the onset of COVID-19 and, as the payer of last resort for families with no insurance, monthly therapy costs have also doubled.

Pat's Place is now preparing to serve more than 800 children this year, 100 more than expected due to an anticipated influx of maltreatment, abuse and domestic violence associated with the COVID-19 crisis.

We hope that you are taking extra precautions to limit your exposure and remain healthy during this time. Our community is strong, and we hope all will work together to address this public health challenge.

Sincerely,



Andrew M. Oliver
Executive Director