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Metrocare Ready to Provide Telehealth to Thousands in Dallas

Texas Medical Board issues new rules allowing Metrocare and other providers to begin telehealth practice immediately. Metrocare clinics see unusual spike in walk-in traffic at area clinics.

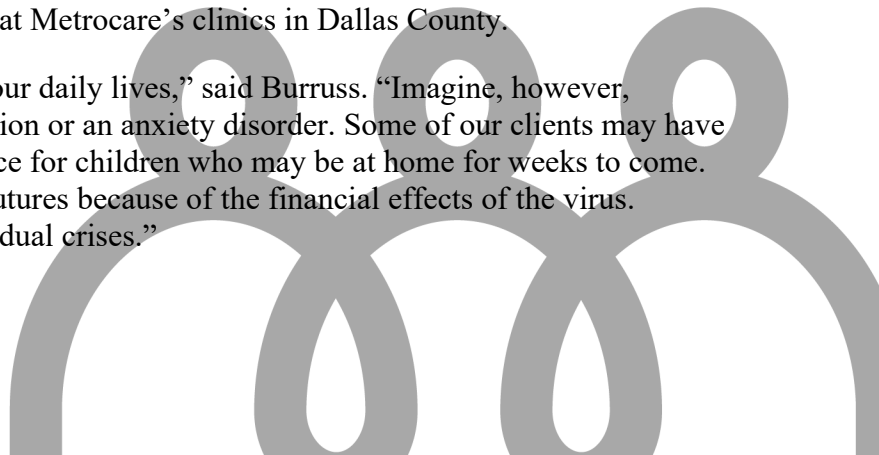
DALLAS, TX – Metrocare, the largest provider of mental and behavioral healthcare in North Texas, applauded new guidance issued over the weekend by the Texas Medical Board (TMB). After Governor Greg Abbott’s state disaster declaration Friday, TMB instituted new protocols that allow licensed Texas physicians and permit holders to provide telephone consultation or telehealth to their patients. TMB made the decision so patients can receive or maintain medical care during the current novel COVID-19 threat. The guidelines allow enhanced utilization of telehealth for diagnosis, treatment, ordering of tests and prescribing for all conditions.

“This is an important decision,” said John W. Burruss, CEO of Metrocare, “because right now, patients need therapy and assistance more than ever. We began preparing for this change two weeks ago. In my mind, this could be a life-saving regulatory decision, and TMB moved quickly and decisively on the issue.”

Metrocare provides an array of mental health and developmental disability services for Dallas County residents, serving over 18,000 people every month. In addition to providing for the uninsured, Metrocare is one of the few mental and behavioral health providers that offers services to Medicaid patients and those who are underinsured.

Dr. Burruss reported an unusual spike Monday at Metrocare’s clinics in Dallas County.

“All of us are making monumental changes in our daily lives,” said Burruss. “Imagine, however, managing this stress while also battling depression or an anxiety disorder. Some of our clients may have two jobs, but immediately have to find assistance for children who may be at home for weeks to come. In fact, they may have jobs with questionable futures because of the financial effects of the virus. Clearly, people all over Dallas are facing individual crises.”





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Metrocare’s clinics will remain open, but some may change operating hours and staffing levels as the clinicians work remotely to provide telehealth services. Providers will also continue limited home visits in some situations, such as patients with special needs. Metrocare will also provide prescription refills via telephone interviews or counseling sessions.

“We are also taking steps to keep our employees safe in this difficult time,” said Burruss. “We are screening patients in-clinic and by phone to ensure they are not symptomatic of the COVID-19 virus. In addition, we have stepped up deep-cleaning of our facilities and offices while also following the CDC and Health Department guidelines encouraging workers to be ‘socially-distant’ from patients and the general public.”

Dr. Burruss offered emphatic praise for all the agency’s health care workers.

“They also have enormous pressures, but they are continuing to serve our people who are feeling afraid and anxious,” said Burruss. “These professionals can’t take time off because there’s a significant local population that is dependent on them.”

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About Metrocare Services

Metrocare is the largest provider of mental health services in North Texas, serving more than 60,000 adults and children annually. For over 50 years, Metrocare has provided a broad array of services to people with mental health challenges and developmental disabilities. In addition to behavioral health care, Metrocare provides primary care centers for adults and children, services for veterans and their families, accessible pharmacies, housing and supportive social services. Alongside the clinical care, researchers and teachers from Metrocare’s Altshuler Center for Education & Research are advancing mental health beyond Dallas County while providing critical workforce to the state. For more information, visit metrocareservices.org or call 214-743-1200. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

