

Suicide - Substance Use - Child Protective Services Press Release - April 30, 2020

The county human services programs in Lycoming and Clinton Counties want the community to know that they are open for business. The Lycoming-Clinton Mental Health Program and the Lycoming Children & Youth Services, which are both part of the Lycoming-Clinton Joinder Programs, as well as, the West Branch Drug and Alcohol Abuse Commission are all continuing regular operations with some modifications for social distancing and health & safety measures. Many services are currently being offered via telephone and video, but in-person contacts continue as well for crisis intervention, child protective services investigations and treatment services. This article looks at three areas of concern in our community.

Mental Health and Suicide:

The Lycoming-Clinton Mental Health Program has trained, professional staff available to assist individuals and families in the bi-county 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. During this time of social isolation and physical distancing, with schools and businesses closed and many people experiencing loss and changes in their routines, it is common to feel sad, anxious, frustrated, angry or frightened. All of these feelings are normal responses. This is a stressful time with a great deal of uncertainty. Some of us are able to cope in a reasonable manner, but others find it overwhelming and need support.

Through the first 4 months of 2020 there has been 9 suicides in Lycoming County and 1 in Clinton County. This marks a 125% increase over the same period in 2019. Suicide is always preventable, but it helps to know what the warning signs are and where to find assistance. Suicide affects all ages, all races, all ethnicities and all social and economic groups.

If you are thinking of ending your life, even if it's just a fleeting thought, you can always ask for help. You are not alone. You are valuable and important and there is someone available to talk with you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. No problem is insurmountable. You have options.

If you are concerned about someone, but aren't sure what to do, there is someone available to talk with you as well. Information is also available locally and online that you can use to educate yourself.

You can call the **Lycoming-Clinton MHID Office 24 hours a day:**

Lycoming County (570)326-7895

Clinton County (570)748-2262

Toll Free (800)525-7938

Or the State Hotline:

DHS Center for Community Resources 24 hr. Crisis Intervention Hotline

1(855)284-2494 TTY 1(724)631-5600

Or the National Hotline:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1(800)273-Talk(8255)

Or Text the National Hotline:

Crisis Text Line

Text "PA" or "HELP" or "HELLO" to 741741

Other resources include:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services' (SAMHSA)

Disaster Distress Line

Toll free 1(800)985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746

Optum Public Crisis Line

(866)342-6892

Veterans Crisis Line

1(800)273-8255 Press 1

Preventing Suicide in PA (<http://preventingsuicidepa.org/>)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (<http://www.crisistextline.org>)

Suicide Warning signs include talking about suicide or wanting to die, expressing that things will never get any better, appearing to be in terrible emotional pain, appearing withdrawn from everyone or everything, seeming anxious or 'on edge' or having frequent flashes of anger.

Suicide Risk factors to keep in mind include history of depression, previous suicide attempts, loss of job, loss of money or loss of home, divorce or relationship problems, health issues, being expelled from school, or being bullied or assaulted.

Substance Abuse:

If you are seeking help for yourself or a loved one, you are not alone. Substance Abuse affects 1 in every 10 Americans and approximately 1 in every 4 adults suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year.

Substance use disorder and Co-Occurring disorders often require outside help. Contact West Branch Drug & Alcohol Abuse Commission if you are concerned about yourself or your loved one as you may be seeing signs of unmanageability in your life or your loved one's life. No matter who you are, what happened in your life, or how you got to us, we are here to help you and your loved ones on your path to recovery.

Let our trained and compassionate staff guide you through this difficult time. We are proud to be your first step on the road to recovery, and we will be with you the whole way to provide support and resources to the citizens of Lycoming and Clinton counties.

**Contact West Branch Drug & Alcohol Abuse Commission ~ 24/7 at 888.941.2721
or Online at <https://wbdrugandalcohol.org/>**

Children, Youth and Families:

Lycoming County Children and Youth understands this is a very stressful time for families in our community. Layoffs, school and day care closures, stay at home restrictions, health and safety concerns and the uncertainty over the future all contribute to the stress and anxiety that families are dealing with. We want to encourage families to ask for help, guidance or support when they are feeling overwhelmed. We are very concerned for the safety and wellbeing of all children during this difficult time. Abuse and neglect did not stop due to the Corona Virus and given all of the additional stressors; it likely increased. However, our referral numbers do not indicate that is happening.

During March and April of last year (2019), the Agency received 104 Child Protective Service (CPS) referrals alleging some type of child abuse and 90 General Protective Service (GPS) referrals alleging some form of neglect. Referrals coming in since March 1 of this year through April 29th are down 34%. However, CPS reports are down about 52%. The Agency has received 50 CPS referrals and 78 GPS referrals in March and April of this year.

This reduction in referral numbers is the result of children not interacting with those mandated by state law to report suspected abuse. Historically, 80% or more of Lycoming County's child abuse and neglect referrals come from mandated reporters. In April, mandated reporters made up only 60% of the referrals. When children are not in school, going to day care, Head Start or some other preschool program, not involved in little league, the scouts or other organized activities potential abuse is not being reported. The Agency wants everyone to know that anyone can and should report suspected abuse. We also want families to know that if they are struggling that we provide a variety of supportive services that can help alleviate some of the stress parents may be feeling during this difficult time. We have a family outreach service that helps families identify and connect with other resources in the community, provides parenting education, budgeting and general assistance in overcoming some of the barriers to accessing supportive services. Caseworkers can help families get connected to mental health and D&A services, rental/housing assistance and assist families in any way we can so they are able to keep their children safe and well cared for.

Contact Lycoming Children & Youth Services - 24/7 at 570-326-7895 or the Statewide Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-932-0313