

Mental Health Council  
of Arkansas

# Handout 7

## Mental Health Council of Arkansas tackled challenges to respond to COVID-19 crisis

The **Mental Health Council of Arkansas** is a non-profit organization representing 12 community mental health centers and 1 specialty clinic. Our members serve the behavioral healthcare needs of the citizens in all 75 counties in the state. [www.mhca.org](http://www.mhca.org)

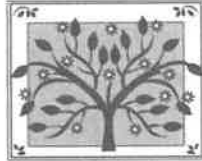
All members of the Mental Health Council of Arkansas (MHCA) are considered essential health providers and as such did not ever close their doors during the COVID-19 crisis. All providers found a way to serve their clients as safely as possible.

- All members of the Mental Health Council shifted rapidly to convert traditional in-person mental health and substance use disorder services to telehealth services. Prior to the pandemic, providers in the MHCA provided an average of 2% of services via telehealth. Within the initial days of the crisis, some providers pivoted to as much as 80% of services being delivered via telehealth. This was done with remarkable speed, but with care to ensure that all services were clinically effective.
- Some clinicians performed services from their homes while some worked from their offices. Clients could receive services via telehealth on their cell phone in their own home.
- These services were essential to keep clients out of more restrictive environments such as hospitalization. During the first 4 months of the pandemic, March – June, the members of the Mental Health Council of Arkansas performed over 4,400 emergency psychiatric screenings and diverted 60% of these emergencies from acute hospitalizations.

The Mental Health Council of Arkansas found creative ways to care both for clients and their communities.

- At Birchtree Communities, providers adapted to provide services in each client's residence to allow for social distancing. A client, Tracy, stated, "Staff always check on me and make sure I am ok. They are here at least 3 times a day... and that makes me feel good." Another client, Tina, stated, "The care has been marvelous, and the staff have all been compassionate and they helped me to not get sick."
- The school-based staff at Mid-South Health Systems partnered with Jonesboro Public Schools to help serve meals to students in need. William Cheatham, Assistant Superintendent, states, "Mid-South worked to contact our students they work with to deliver meals. Mid-South also assisted our school building staff with maintaining contact with students they service. With Mid-South's assistance in this regard we were able to continue to provide counseling services, as well as maintain contact in order to make sure our students are safe and healthy."
- A homeless client recently wrote a letter to Ouachita Behavioral Health and Wellness (OBHAW) stating: "I'm a client of OBHAW. I have been homeless and hungry. They have helped me get a place and food. If not for them talking to me and helping me to pull through one day at a time, I don't know what I would have done. They are like family to me." OBHAW served 45 homeless individuals during this time period.
- One provider created a mobile injection clinic where nurses drove to clients who needed their medication in the form of long acting injectables. {We have a picture from this.}

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The Mental Health Council of Arkansas has served Arkansans for nearly 50 years to ensure that all persons have access to quality mental health services. That mission continues today.

**Birch Tree Communities**

Benton, Arkansas  
(501)315-3344

**Centers for Youth and Families**

Little Rock, Arkansas  
(501)666-8686.

**Counseling Associates**

Conway, Arkansas  
(501)336-8300

**Counseling Clinic**

Benton, Arkansas  
(501)315-4224

**Delta Counseling Associates**

Monticello, Arkansas  
(870)367-9732

**Mid-South Health Systems**

Jonesboro, Arkansas  
(870)972-4000

**Ouachita Behavioral Health & Wellness**

Hot Springs, Arkansas  
(501)620-5300

**Ozark Guidance**

Springdale, Arkansas  
(479)750-2020

**Professional Counseling Associates**

North Little Rock, AR 72117  
501-221-1843

**Southeast Arkansas Behavioral Healthcare System**

Pine Bluff, Arkansas  
(870)534-1834

**South Arkansas Regional Health Center**

El Dorado, Arkansas  
(870)862-7921

**Southwest Arkansas Counseling**

& MHC Texarkana, Arkansas  
(870)773-4655

**Western Arkansas Counseling & Guidance Center**

Ft. Smith, Arkansas  
(479)452-6650



 Birch Tree Communities, Inc.

 Community Mental Health Centers

Ouachita Behavioral Health & Wellness

Counseling Associates

Counseling Clinic, Inc.

Delta Counseling Associates, Inc.

Centers for Youth & Families

Mid-South Health Systems

Ozark Guidance

Professional Counseling Associates, Inc.

South Arkansas Regional Health Center, Inc.

Southeast Arkansas Behavioral Healthcare System, Inc.

Southwest Arkansas Counseling & Mental Health Center

Western Arkansas Counseling & Guidance Center, Inc.