

## SAPC PREVENTION SERVICES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) on COVID-19

SAPC is issuing guidance to its substance use disorder (SUD) prevention and treatment network providers in response to the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Since SUDs are chronic and relapsing health conditions, it is essential to maintain access to care and ensure ongoing essential operations for individuals receiving services while implementing strategies that reduce virus transmission.

Providers need to ensure that staff and others are informed about the risks and symptoms of COVID-19 and implement appropriate precautions to reduce the spread of the virus. Providers should develop or update policies and procedures, as well as emergency plans, to address health issues like COVID-19 and ensure appropriate delivery of services during these times.

In anticipation of an increase in COVID-19 cases, State, County, and local leaders took additional actions to slow the spread of COVID-19, with Los Angeles County's Health Officer issuing a new [Health Officer Order](#), Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti issuing an Emergency Order called "[Safer at Home](#)", and Governor Gavin Newsom issued a statewide order called "[Stay-at-Home](#)".

### Application of 'Safer at Home' Order for SAPC-Contracted Prevention Services

#### 1. What are the critical mandates that apply to substance use prevention services?

**4/30/2020:** Our State, County, and local leaders are taking steps to slow the spread of COVID-19. While the Health Officer Order, "Safer at Home", and "Stay-at-Home" orders may have different names or cover different jurisdictions, they are aligned in stating: everyone who is not an essential worker must stay at home and only go out for essential activities.

- Cancel all public and private events.
- Practice the 6 feet social distancing rule.
- Closure of all non-essential retail businesses, including indoor malls and shopping centers.
- Closure of indoor and outdoor playgrounds (except those in childcare centers).
- Closure of other non-essential businesses, including non-essential retail stores and nail and hair salons.
- Closure of all indoor and outdoor sports playing fields including but not limited to golf courses, basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts, hiking trails, parks, beaches, and soccer and baseball fields.

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- In accordance with the CDC, [individuals over the age of 60 or who are immune-deficient and have a chronic medical illness](#) including lung disease, heart disease, or diabetes are higher risk of getting sick from COVID-19 are asked to avoid congregating and to stay at home as much as possible.

Businesses that ensure we have our medicine and healthcare, food to eat, water to drink, communications and electricity will remain open; this includes County government such as the Department of Public Health.

SAPC prevention providers are considered non-essential services with respect to the [“Safer at Home”](#) order and are required to immediately suspend face-to-face services, ensure appropriate notification of those served, and transition staff to telework, when possible. Please carefully review the Safer at Home order and thank you in advance for following the requirements in the interest of preventing the spread of COVID-19. For additional information, please also review [DPH Guidance for Non-Residential Substance Use Settings](#).

**5/15/2020: Updated SAPC Information Notice**

Los Angeles County has created a [Roadmap to Recovery](#) that outlines a phased approach to reopen low-risk businesses with appropriate safeguards in place. Prevention providers are able to reopen and resume limited in-person work if ensuring appropriate social/physical distancing, proper infection control, and prioritizing access to critical services.

Importantly, group activities via telehealth or telephone are still encouraged. Prevention providers are able to use public facing platforms inclusive of Facebook Live, Twitch, TikTok, and similar video communication applications for efforts that are not associated with individual- or group-based processing/counseling sessions.

As social/physical distancing protocols continue to be enforced for large group gatherings and schools/university closures, we encourage you to use this time for program planning, development, and ensuring service delivery readiness where appropriate. Similar to SAPC Treatment, in-person group activities are now allowable as outlined under the **Temporary Limit of Participants for All In-Person Group Activities** section within the updated SAPC Informational Notice:

**Temporary Limit of Participants for All In-Person Group Activities**

*In light of escalating COVID-19 cases and the growing need to enhance infection control to relieve overburdened hospitals, unprecedented actions are being taken to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission in our communities. In recognition of the need to balance*

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*concerns about transmission risk with the benefits of group activities, beginning May 15, 2020 for treatment and prevention and until further notice, group activities (including but not limited to group counseling and patient education sessions) are limited to no more than ten (10) participants, including staff and patients/participants, if conducted in accordance with social/physical distancing requirements. Importantly, group activities via telehealth or telephone are still encouraged.*

*These actions are necessary to support the community-wide efforts to minimize disease spread through the limitation of group gatherings and activities. SAPC will continually reassess these temporary modifications of group activities and modify allowances based on COVID-19 transmission risks and considering risks and benefits of clients, staff, and communities. Providers are encouraged to explore approved on-line platforms to deliver these services as groups may be offered via telehealth and telephone.*

Your work continues to remain critical in addressing the adverse impact of alcohol and drug use on individuals and communities and reducing the likelihood that youth, young adults, and adults need SUD treatment services.

For more information, please refer to the most updated SAPC Informational Notice: [SAPC Provider Information on Coronavirus](#). For additional information, please also review [DPH Guidance for Non-Residential Substance Use Settings](#).

**2. What are some resources and trusted sites for COVID-19 related information?**

- [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health](#)
- [SAPC Provider Information on Coronavirus](#)
- [DHCS COVID-19 Response Page](#)
  
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - [Information on Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation](#)
  - [Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#)

**Billable Prevention Strategies**

**3. How should the CSAP Strategies be modified during this period?**

Due to the COVID-19 Emergency, DHCS encourages the use of telehealth services, as appropriate. Telehealth services are allowable and reimbursable through SABG funding. We recommend full use of the CSAP ‘information dissemination’ strategy via telephone, virtual town halls, social media, etc., in lieu of face to face contact. We also recommend

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use of ‘community-based process’ including coalition/workgroup activities, virtual or telephonic intra/inter-agency coordination/collaboration, virtual training and technical assistance, etc.

### PPSDS Reporting

- 4. What are prevention activities that are acceptable by DHCS as innovative ways of providing other services to address community needs as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency?**

SAPC is currently communicating with DHCS to support innovative ways to address the COVID-19 public health emergency in our local communities. We will continue to communicate these administrative updates with you. We appreciate your flexibility during this time.

In general, it is recommended that interim activities during the COVID-19 public health emergency must continue to meet criteria for CSAP strategies as allowable expenditures.

If you are already providing some of these COVID-19 related substance use prevention services or will provide them, please maintain a list of activities using the template below.

<b>Provider Name</b>	<b>Activity Date</b>	<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Activity Description</b>	<b>Direct or Indirect Service</b>	<b>Duration</b>
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Trainings have been provided in April 2020 to assist with reporting of activities.

For questions related to PPSDS reporting, please contact SAPC PPSDS liaison, Rafael Vasquez by email at [RaVasquez@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:RaVasquez@ph.lacounty.gov).

### Communication among Providers with SAPC Staff

- 5. What’s the best way to communicate with SAPC staff?**

SAPC Prevention Specialists are available via email, telephone, and Skype.

- 6. Who will maintain the Shutterfly SUD Prevention website /calendar?**

We encourage all providers to communicate with each other within the LA County Prevention Network and share information by posting messages on Shutterfly. If help is needed, please contact your SAPC Prevention Specialist.

## Monthly Invoices

### 7. Should we expect delays in monthly processing and payment of invoices?

No, we do not expect invoices to be delayed while the “Safer at Home” order is in place. Continue to submit monthly invoices by the 10th of every month. These monthly invoices need to be processed by SAPC Prevention and Finance by the 15th of every month. Payments are generally processed by the 25th of every month by SAPC Finance.

Monthly invoice statements must be verified by your assigned Prevention Program Specialist and Finance staff prior to payment. The monthly invoices report monthly expenditures by each agency/contract. Claims must first be paid or denied based on accurate invoice statements and in accordance with any other federal/state/local/SAPC restrictions and written contracts. Contracted agencies will only be reimbursed after their monthly invoices are submitted. DHCS also relies on these monthly provider invoices during auditing.

## SAPC Prevention Deliverables

### 8. Given that the COVID-19 has impacted many programs, how should providers respond during the COVID-19 public health emergency?

We understand everyone’s concerns regarding uncertainty due to this COVID-19 health crisis. However, it is expected for prevention services to continue where it is possible. During this time, Prevention providers can be creative and innovative in their prevention approach, within the confines of acceptable evidence-based practice, to reach your target populations. Social media is a broad-based platform, which provides for a wide range of opportunities for expansive outreach to youth and adults alike. Some aspects of essential services may be allowable (See #4).

Additionally, we are leveraging support from DHCS and CPI with provision of additional trainings and resources to assist local Counties and providers in addressing identified challenges associated with the COVID-19 public health emergency. During this unprecedented time, we encourage providers to continue communicating with your Prevention Program Specialist and the PPSDS Data Team for updates.

### 9. Can providers adjust the FY2019-2020 and FY2020-2021 Work Plans given the current state of COVID-19?

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For the FY2019-2020 Work Plans: It is recommended to allow your agency to adjust to the “Safer at Home” order and make attempts to adjust to the temporary order as it directly impacts your ability to provide services as identified in your Work Plan. If you continue to experience issues with fulfilling the Work Plan as currently written, then we recommend that you amend the Work Plan and send to your respective SAPC program specialist or liaison for approval. We will work with you to ensure the Work Plan reflects the changes as a result of new and emerging COVID-19 public health emergency measures.

For the FY2020-2021 Work Plans: Please note that they are due on June 1, 2020. Similar to other fiscal years, agencies can amend work plans as necessary throughout the new fiscal year. It is recommended to ensure continuity of programs from previous fiscal years, where appropriate.

**10. How can providers continue to remain productive with our prevention activities during this time, especially if a majority of activities require in-person interaction?**

As indicated above, be innovative in your approach for developing creative messages via social media and webinar for your target population, as in-person activity and engagement is not an option at this time. Per DHCS, telehealth through telephonic services, webinars, and online classes and trainings are temporarily allowable during the COVID-19 public health emergency. As an example, PowerPoint presentations can still be informational and engaging, and can be modified for social media and webinar formats. Some aspects of essential services may be allowable (See #4).

**11. In the case that schools remain closed, what can prevention providers still do to maintain contractual agreements/requirements? Will SAPC be more flexible with activity completion?**

We understand that the ability to provide in-person services, including youth engagement, is restricted. The foremost and central concern is for the health, safety and overall well-being of staff and the communities you serve. As social distancing continues to be imperative during this time, we encourage providers to be creative in facilitating the deliverables of their contractual work plans in modified form. By specifically utilizing social media and webinars as resources for outreach and education, much of your activity can be considered and categorized as information dissemination. Some aspects of essential services may be allowable (See #4).

**12. Can we hire outside IT staff to assist us given that we are now working more virtually?**

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IT consultants can be hired a long this cost fits within your budget. Per SAPC contract, if providers are hiring the minimum requirement of staff, you can try and access expertise in the IT or social media arena.

**13. Agencies are informing our communities about the COVID-19 virus. Do you suggest that we continue this type of outreach?**

We encourage you to be creative in your approach by virtually reaching out to your community. As examples, you can utilize social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, etc.) to share messaging about your prevention services and COVID-19 preventative measures, a provider partner, or SAPC media campaigns. If you are facing challenges with digital/social media, reach out for guidance from your community partners. Some aspects of essential services may be allowable (See #4).

### Materials Review

**14. While our staff telecommutes, they do not have access to scanners to transmit approved forms. How can we receive SAPC's approval of materials review?**

SAPC staff will review and approve your materials via email. At this time, your Material Review form is not needed. Please keep record of all electronically approved material for future follow-up.

### SAPC Prevention Audits

**15. We understand SAPC contract program auditors (CPAs) will perform desk audits for the balance of this fiscal year. While we telecommute, we may not have access to needed files. Will we be granted an extension for the audit?**

If you have limited access to needed files for your audit, please contact your auditor and explain your circumstances and, if needed, request an extension for your planned audit. Please involve your Prevention Program Specialist during this process. You may also contact [sapcmonitoring@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:sapcmonitoring@ph.lacounty.gov) for more information.

### Security and Privacy Reminders

SAPC would like to remind you that while working remotely, protecting the County's information is paramount. Remember, information security is the responsibility of all of us. Teleworking introduces new risks that we do not normally face. We all must be diligent to protect ourselves, not only from the spread of the virus but from bad actors attempting to exploit the current crisis. All contractual policies remain applicable when you are teleworking.

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### **Family and Teleworking**

As we all practice social distancing and self-quarantining, many of us are working from home, as are other family members. Family members should not be permitted to view or have access to devices or information (electronic or printed).

If you print County documents to a personal printer, be sure to secure these printed documents. Do not dispose of county documents in the trash. Either shred them or retain the printed material until you return to the office and dispose of them securely in appropriate shred bins.

Hold phone calls and Skype/WebEx meetings in locations in a secure and private location, particularly if you are discussing anything related to confidential records or sensitive topics.

To prevent against unwanted participants joining video teleconferencing meetings, it is advised not to make meetings public. Users should require a meeting password, or use waiting room options to control who has access to the meeting. It is also recommended to not share links to private teleconferencing meetings on public social media posts, and instead provide links directly to intended participants. Hosts of these teleconferencing meetings can limit screen sharing to “Host Only” to prevent people and unintended participants from taking over and sharing images or content that is inappropriate or alarming.

### **Physical Safeguards while Teleworking**

Do not leave laptops, tablets, mobile phones, other devices or printed material unattended in your home workspace, vehicle or any unsecured location.

Always secure the screen on your laptop, phone, or other devices. You can immediately lock the screen of your Windows computer by pressing the Windows Key and the “L” key simultaneously.

### **Dangerous Websites, Phishing Emails and Social Media:**

Remember that scammers and malicious actors always follow the headlines and popular trends. These malicious actors tailor their scams, phishing emails, social media postings, and fake websites to what the general public are highly interested in. This crisis is no different and offers scammers a plethora of potential opportunities.

### **Dangerous Websites**

To date, two websites have been identified and validated as highly malicious. Under no circumstances should you visit the following two websites on any device.

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- corona-virus-map[.]com – This is a fake coronavirus map that will install a virus to your computer.
- coronavirusapp[.]site – This site hosts a malicious Android app that purports to track coronavirus activity. The app actually deploys a version of Ransomware to the mobile device.

When surfing the Internet, be sure you are visiting trusted sites.

### **Phishing**

We want to remind you that “Phishing” is a tactic that uses email, often in conjunction with malicious websites, to gain personal information by pretending to be a trusted individual or organization. While working remotely on your personal devices some of the protective measures that we employ may not be as effective so be sure to exercise caution when opening emails referencing the Coronavirus. Again, here are some tips that can help to recognize malicious emails and avoid becoming a victim of fraud, identity theft, and exposure to malware:

- Be very suspicious of emails from unfamiliar people or organizations.
- Watch for a sense of urgency in the message. If the message is demanding immediate action consider that it may be phishing.
- Never respond to requests for personal information. Those asking for your name, phone number, social security number, credit card, login credentials, etc.
- Spelling and/or grammatical errors are often indicators of phishing. Rarely do legitimate e-mail messages contain these types of mistakes.
- Look at the email address. If something looks suspicious, report it.
- Hover over any embedded links or buttons. Examine the web address that appears. This can provide a clue to where the link will take you.
- Watch out for unexpected attachments. If you are not expecting an email with an attachment, check with the sender (if you know the sender).

Be sure to follow these same precautions when accessing your personal email too. Warn your family members of these indicators so that they can also be diligent in their email communications.

### **Social Media**

Be cautious on Social Media. Don't get tricked by malicious actors on social media platforms. Before interacting with individuals, be sure that they are real and not an imposter created to pretend to be an individual or group.