

Family Services Coronavirus Response

UPDATED March 23, 2020

Dear Friends,

As news about the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve, the health and safety of our Family Services' staff, and all the individuals and families our organization serves, is our top priority. Because we share in the collective duty to strengthen and care for our community, we want you to know how Family Services is navigating this time of uncertainty.

Family Services' staff will continue to work remotely and deliver as much programming and support as we can to our community during these uncertain and unprecedented times. We are adhering to recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as local and state public health authorities. Of course, as we closely monitor the ongoing situation, we will remain flexible and responsive to do the right thing for our community.

As a community partner for more than 160 years, we remain committed to continuing our mission to empower, nurture, and support children and families through life's challenges to help them reach their full potential.

Although this is primarily a physical health crisis, the toll it's taking on mental health is enormous. Fear and isolation are the hallmarks of this pandemic. Family Services cannot treat a fever, but we can help people manage anxiety, cope with stress and maintain self-care.

To that end, I want you to be aware of what we're doing to ensure the safety and care of all our clients, volunteers, staff and stakeholders:

1. Our Family & Community Resource Center, located at One Union Street in Lawrence, will close to the community on Tuesday, March 24, until we receive confirmation from state and local officials that it is safe to re-open. For updated information on our schedule, please visit: <https://www.facebook.com/famcommresourcecenter/>
2. Our Mental Health Clinic, located at 430 N. Canal Street in Lawrence, is categorized as an essential business and will be open to our current clients that are most in need of mental health services Monday – Thursday from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Our professional clinicians will continue to conduct in-person sessions until tele-health sessions can be established for all clients. If you are a current client and would like to speak with your clinician, please call: 978-327-6600.

3. Family Services' Samaritans helpline is fully staffed and operational. These uncertain items can lead to feelings of isolation, sadness and depression. **If you or anyone you know needs to reach out for support during this difficult time, our Samaritans volunteers are here for you.**
 - Toll Free: 1-866-912-4673
 - Merrimack Valley: 978-327-6607
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

4. Lastly, until further notice, all Family Services' non-essential personnel are working remotely and we have asked both staff and volunteers to refrain from in-person meetings. That said, we are working to stay connected to young people via creative online mentoring sessions and opportunities, and developing ways to continue to build and strengthen our community. We will re-evaluate these decisions as more information and direction becomes available from the CDC as well as state and local government agencies, and we will make decisions that continue to put the safety and well-being of our clients and staff first.

There will be a long-lasting impact on our communities and there will surely be an increase in demands for services and programs. At Family Services, we stand ready to respond as needed. In doing so, we continue to need the help of the community more than ever. **If you would like to support our evolving efforts, please visit fsmv.org/donate to help us to continue our important work!**

Leading in times of uncertainty is always a challenge. And yet I have been inspired by the humanity and determination I have seen from all corners of our local and larger communities.

We stand ready to assist the community and encourage you to be courageous in doing what is right for your families, your organizations and our community. We are always better together!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth Sweeney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Elizabeth Sweeney
Chief Executive Officer