



31 March 2020

Dear LifeLine partners,

DISRUPTION because of covid-19 demands TRANSFORMATION: LIFELINE JOHANNESBURG NEW CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

LifeLine Johannesburg is using various electronic platforms to support mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant nationwide shutdown.

Our face-to-face community outreach and other in-person services were scaled back as from 13 March 2020 and shut down as from 17 March 2020. This was due to four incidents of close contact with both confirmed COVID-19 cases and suspected COVID-19 infections. We had to take this difficult decision even prior to the nationwide shutdown as we are deeply concerned about the spread of COVID-19 among our clients who are mostly living in overcrowded areas such as Alexandra while many clients also have serious underlying health issues such as HIV and TB.

Our services during the shutdown period are:

1. Telephonic counselling having set up a system for counsellors to counsel from home while booking of shifts are cloud based.
2. Cloud based client intake forms, reporting and gathering statistics
3. Face-to-face counselling using Zoom and WhatsApp video calls.
4. Group training of new counsellors using Zoom which involves modifying training material
5. Moving our structured counsellor supervision and debriefing schedule into the virtual space and adapting it to be cloud based.
6. Developing useful numbers for clients to get support of a practical nature eg food, shelters etc.

In order to deliver these services in a structured way while meeting our ethical standards, we developed the necessary protocols to support the shift of services into the virtual space. This has been a big task which had to be done at double quick speed. It helped that we had a head start prior to the nationwide shutdown when we were compelled to shut down early. Currently our services in the virtual space are fully operational while constantly evolving in response to the unpredictable situation we find ourselves in.

Adapting our services so speedily in response to the COVID-19 shutdown is driven by our deep concern for mental health and wellbeing as well as our unique position to support the South African community on a psycho-social level during these trying times. And indeed, our services are very busy. While we are observing extremely high levels of distress and trauma among clients using our services, we are at the same time encouraged to see our body of staff and volunteers rolling up their sleeves and learning new methods to continue service delivery.

Best regards,

Isabella Holden

Director

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