



AGENCY ANNOUNCES IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Northeast Delta Human Services Authority takes action to mitigate the health and safety concerns of agency staff and clients

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONROE, LA – To avoid the potential spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) through the agency's clinics and offices, Northeast Delta Human Services Authority is implementing several new universal health and safety measures agency-wide.

"Our top priority is the health and safety of our clients and staff," said Dr. Monteic A. Sizer, executive director of Northeast Delta. "Extensive discussion has occurred around this emerging situation, and several preventative measures have been implemented in regards to protecting the vulnerable populations that our agency serves. We recognize the importance of implementing appropriate precautions and that such precautions will save countless lives."

Northeast Delta HSA serves as the foremost safety net provider of intellectual and physical disability supports, prevention and wellness programs, and behavioral and primary healthcare services. For this reason, effective immediately, all Northeast Delta clinics and facilities will primarily operate based on appointments only.

By temporarily discontinuing walk-in appointments for non-established clients, as well as being proactive about scheduling existing clients in advance of their appointments, the agency can limit human to human contact and more easily practice social distancing to lessen the spread of COVID-19. However, and at the same time, the agency will rely on its telepsychiatry capacity, and case managers will perform well checks to verify that all clients are receiving the care they need during this time.

Prevention and wellness outreach efforts, assessments, and screenings in schools and communities will be significantly lessened to reduce the chance of community spread of COVID-19. Additionally, in-home services for clients with developmental disabilities will be prioritized based on those clients with the greatest need. Developmental Disabilities staff will be diligent in communicating with all clients to ensure that their needs continue to be met.

Precautions are now in place for those who schedule appointments to visit the agency's clinics and administration offices. All staff, clients, and visitors will have their temperature checked upon entry. They will be asked a series of questions as well. If fever or other symptoms are present, and if they answer yes to certain questions, those individuals will not be permitted to enter the facility.

Furthermore, all agency facilities have implemented enhanced cleaning procedures, including the use of coronavirus-killing cleaning agents multiple times each day.

"We must be careful to mitigate the exposure to illness in all of our clinics and facilities so we can continue to provide services to those clients who cannot go 14 to 30 days without services," said Sizer. "Executive management team members within our agency are working with our administrative, clinical, and support teams to actively review client information and prioritize the care for those most in need across our region."

To minimize the service gap for those clients not identified as high need during this crisis, Northeast Delta provides a 24/7 helpline at 1-800-256-2522. Additionally, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Helpline is available 24/7 at 1-800-662-4357. For those seeking information about COVID-19, the Governor's Office is utilizing the state's 211 network to answer calls about the virus.

"As we all grapple with the response phase of this COVID-19 pandemic, Northeast Delta is also making efforts to prepare for the inevitable recovery phase of this crisis," said Sizer. "We will be prepared to help our communities establish a new normal and recover from COVID-19."

Individuals seeking additional information about the coronavirus and recommended precautions are encouraged to visit the Louisiana Department of Health's website at <http://ldh.la.gov> and the Louisiana Governor's Office website at <https://gov.louisiana.gov>.

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About Northeast Delta Human Services Authority

Northeast Delta HSA manages the operation of community-based programs to improve the quality of life for individuals with major mental illness, developmental disabilities, and addictive disorders. Northeast Delta accomplishes this by utilizing a nationally-recognized and integrative approach that identifies and addresses behavioral and primary health care needs.

Our agency operates through collaboration with regional partners in business, prevention, education, and care in 12 parishes (Caldwell, East Carroll, West Carroll, Ouachita, Lincoln, Madison, Franklin, Morehouse, Jackson, Tensas, Richland, and Union). Northeast Delta is devoted to delivering programs and services that encourage citizens of northeast Louisiana to reach their full human potential. Three tenets guide these efforts: excellent customer service, greater access to services, and competent, quality care.

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