

## **Support Services for Addiction during COVID-19**

Staying connected to support and services during the COVID-19 pandemic is critical for the millions of people who are struggling with substance use disorder (SUD) and recovery. Social support is crucial for people trying to recover from SUD, whereas social isolation is a risk factor for relapse. Even though the social distancing measures being implemented nationwide are important for reducing disease transmission, they may be especially difficult for people in recovery because they limit access to meetings of peer-support groups or other sources of social connection. Groups such as AA or SMART Recovery have been shown to increase members' ability to cope with risky social contexts and negative emotions, reduce impulsivity and enhance well-being, among other positive effects. While use of group support is often coupled with individual therapy, medications, and other interventions, many people do rely solely on groups. With in-person gatherings cancelled, millions of Americans in recovery are now without a crucial lifeline. People who are isolated and stressed frequently turn to substances to alleviate their negative feelings. Those in recovery will face stressors and heightened urges to use substances and will be at greatly increased risk for relapse. Peers and family members should be alert to this possibility.

Studies have found that people in drug and alcohol recovery are more likely to relapse following crises such as terrorist attacks or natural disasters, and the coronavirus pandemic is a similarly disruptive, and frightening situation. Social distancing will increase the likelihood of opioid overdoses happening when there are no observers who can administer naloxone to reverse them and they are more likely to result in fatalities. It's also important to remember that, individuals with addiction could face greater risks related to COVID-19, particularly those who smoke tobacco or marijuana, vape or use opioids or methamphetamines, because of the negative effects these substances have on respiratory and pulmonary systems.

It's essential for people with addiction issues to stay connected to help through any and all available means. This starts with a strong support system at home or within reach that includes supportive family members and friends and being actively involved in 12-step fellowship or other self-help organizations for ongoing support. It's also important to reach out for emotional support or professional help when needed.

Communication can help you and your loved ones feel less lonely and isolated. Consider connecting with loved ones by:

- Telephone
- Email
- Mailing letters or cards
- Text messages
- Video chat
- Social media

The good news is there are many helplines, and online resources available, that are easily accessible during the coronavirus pandemic. While not an extensive list, these resources, can help you find at-home support for substance misuse issues during the COVID-19 social distancing mandate and stay at home orders.

## **Online Resources**

[Alcoholics Anonymous](#) (AA) is offering virtual meetings, phone calls, and emails during the COVID-19 crisis.

The [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) is an online resource for suicide awareness and prevention with blogs focused specifically on [taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 crisis](#).

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) has a comprehensive page dedicated to the coronavirus disease and how to manage anxiety and stress.

[Cocaine Anonymous](#) is offering free, voice-only, online meetings, and email services for anyone impacted by cocaine use.

[Mental Health America](#) has a comprehensive resource dedicated to [mental health and COVID-19](#) that includes information on anxiety, medication, substance use, recovery, eating disorders, stress, and general tips on how to manage mental health issues during the COVID-19 outbreak.

[Narcotics Anonymous](#) (NA) is offering meetings online and by phone while their in-person meetings are temporarily shut down.

The [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI) released a [COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide](#) that takes a deep-dive into the major issues people are facing, including anxiety, feeling isolated and alone, finding a therapist to work with online, support for caretakers, and more.

The [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) (NIDA) is a government-run site that has resources and information about prevention, treatment, and recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

[SMART Recovery](#), which stands for Self-Management and Recovery Training, offers mutual support meetings for individuals, family, and friends dealing with addiction recovery. They are currently operating most, and soon all, of their in-person meetings online.

The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) provides resources to help reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness. They have a [COVID-19 resource guide](#) that assists individuals, providers, and communities with finding support and information pertaining to substance abuse and mental health issues.

## **Helplines**

National Alliance on Mental Illness Helpline 1-800-950-6264

The [National Alliance on Mental Illness Helpline](#) offers free support and resources for people living with a mental health condition or family members and caregivers providing support to someone with a mental illness.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255

The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) provides support from counselors 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you or someone you love is experiencing emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, or any other type of crisis, this hotline provides free and confidential support.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services National Helpline 1-800-662-HELP

The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services National Helpline](#) provides confidential and free treatment referral routing services to individuals and family members dealing with addiction and mental health issues. Help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Partnership for Drug-Free Kids 1-855-378-4373

The [Partnership for Drug-Free Kids](#) offers free and confidential support for individuals and family members dealing with substance use and addiction. Specialists are available to talk on the phone or by [email](#).

### **Subscription-Based Apps**

[Aura](#), the app for mindfulness, sleep, and emotional health, is offering a free 3-month subscription to help people fight coronavirus anxiety. All you have to do is use the code: "FINDPEACE2020" at [Aura health](#), and you will get unlimited access to mindfulness meditations, life coaching, inspiring stories, and music, created by the world's best emotional health and sleep coaches.

[Headspace](#) is offering [free meditations](#) you can listen to anytime as part of a larger collection called Weathering the Storm. Topics include relieving stress, walking at home, and feeling overwhelmed.

[Stop Breathe and Think](#) is a mindfulness meditation app that can help you manage stress, anxiety, panic, and worry during the COVID-19 crisis.

Need help? Know someone who does?

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others

- Call 911
- Visit the [SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline](#) call 1-800-985-5990
- Visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) or call 1-800-799-7233
- Connect with the Town Social Workers. If you are a resident who is 60 or older please contact Social Worker Danika Castle in the Council on Aging at 781-275-6825. If you are an individual under the age of 60 you can contact Social Worker Christopher Bang in the Youth and Family Services Department at 781-918-4328.
- Connect with mental health providers at Eliot Community Human Services at 978-369-1113. At this time counseling services at the Town Center through Eliot have shifted to a tele-health service and referrals continue to be accepted. Intakes are being conducted over the phone or by Zoom. Please note that Bedford residents do not pay a co-pay for therapy through Eliot and lack of insurance is not a barrier to services.
- Contact Advocates Psychiatric Emergency Service for compassionate support and connections. If you are experiencing a mental health or emotional crisis, please call (800) 640-5432 to speak to an Advocates crisis clinician. They are available to help 24 hours a day, every day.

Adapted from:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

<https://doi.org/10.7326/M20-1212>

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2020/04/covid-19-potential-implications-individuals-substance-use-disorders>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-addiction/202003/coronavirus-and-addiction>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/people-in-addiction-treatment-are-losing-crucial-support-during-coronavirus-pandemic/2020/03/26/5698eae0-6ac6-11ea-abef-020f086a3fab\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/people-in-addiction-treatment-are-losing-crucial-support-during-coronavirus-pandemic/2020/03/26/5698eae0-6ac6-11ea-abef-020f086a3fab_story.html)