



From the Desk of the Director: COVID-19 Update

Dear colleagues,

As it remains unclear how long it will take until we can resume our normal routines, it is understandable to feel stressed or anxious amid the uncertainty. I want to take this time to remind you that you do not have to cope with these feelings on your own. The State has emotional and mental health supports available for you and your families:

- **Optum**, the State's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, is offering resources to anyone seeking COVID-19-related mental and emotional support, including the free Optum Public Crisis Hotline (866-342-6892) and [webinars and information \[r20.rs6.net\]](https://www.optum.com/webinars-and-information/r20.rs6.net) about topics including managing COVID-19 anxiety, best practices for working remotely and coping with a public health event.
- **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI)**, the State's medical plan administrator, has taken steps to enhance access to care during this time of heightened concern. For the duration of the state of emergency, BCBSRI has extended coverage for triage calls with in-network behavioral health providers to all State Anchor plan participants with no member cost sharing (copay, deductible and/or coinsurance). For the latest FAQs and guidance from BCBSRI regarding COVID-19, please visit [www.bcbsri.com/coronavirus \[r20.rs6.net\]](https://www.bcbsri.com/coronavirus/r20.rs6.net). If you have questions about or need assistance with your BCBSRI policy, please call the State of Rhode Island Employee CARE Center at 401-429-2104 or 866-987-3705. CARE Center hours are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-8 p.m., and Saturday, 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
- **BH Link** is a one-stop, 24/7 call-in center for confidential behavioral health support. Call 401-414-LINK (5465) or visit [www.bhlink.org \[r20.rs6.net\]](https://www.bhlink.org/r20.rs6.net). There is also a special line for children under the age of 18: 855-KID(543)-LINK(5465).

- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** also provides resources and guidance to reduce stress during this public health crisis [here \[r20.rs6.net\]](https://www.cdc.gov/r20/rs6).

In addition, I want to keep you updated on the latest guidance from the federal government and from the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH). During Governor Raimondo's press conference today, Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH, Director of RIDOH, encouraged all Rhode Islanders to consider wearing face coverings, which cover the nose and mouth, when in public.

In alignment with this recommendation, we are also encouraging state employees to wear cloth coverings, if possible. The purpose of wearing a cloth face covering is to limit the spread of respiratory droplets. This is simply another layer of precaution to help protect those around you. A cloth face covering can be sewn by hand or made from items such as scarfs or T-shirts. **This does not mean you should stop practicing social distancing and frequent handwashing.** It is recommended that you wash your face covering frequently – ideally after each use – or at least daily.

RIDOH also noted that members of the general public should not be purchasing medical-grade masks, such as N95s. With the current medical-grade mask shortage, we need to make sure that Rhode Island's health care workers have enough of these types of masks to protect patients in our hospitals and care facilities.

We appreciate all you continue to do to help Rhode Islanders during their time of need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B Smiley".

Brett Smiley
Director
R.I. Department of Administration