

PRESS RELEASE

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For more information or interviews contact:
Wellspring's Development Director: **Kimberly Johnson**
(502) 753-1453
Kim.Johnson@wellspringky.org

Providers on Front Lines for Louisville's Most Vulnerable Adults with Mental Illness During COVID-19

Louisville, KY (March 27, 2020) – While the anxiety and isolation of COVID-19 is effecting everyone's mental health, for adults living with serious mental illnesses like major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other life-changing diagnoses, the fear, social distancing, and subsequent isolation can heighten symptoms. Wellspring (a Louisville non-profit behavioral health provider) is on the front lines helping some of our community's most vulnerable people cope with the pandemic.

“Our staff is putting themselves out there,” says Wellspring CEO Katharine Dobbins, LCSW. “They are taking precautions, but they are risking their own safety to assist hundreds of people who need our help as an essential service to the community.”

To meet the needs of hundreds of people living in Wellspring's Supportive Housing programs and adults who are at-risk for homelessness, Wellspring staff makes personal visits to take clients food, medications and other necessities. Staff members help them cope with symptoms and emotions through this anxious time. Additionally, Wellspring operates the region's only [Crisis Stabilization Programs](#) that provide acute care 24/7 in a home-like setting. The Crisis Stabilization Unit reduces emergency room visits and helps people having a mental health crisis avoid hospitalizations, which is highly advisable given the impact COVID-19 is having on our hospitals and ERs.

“Our staff adjusted quickly to put procedures in place that protect both clients and staff; but, just as hospitals can't protect every doctor and nurse 100%, there are still risks associated with caring for our clients whether in their homes or at the CSU.”

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Dobbins adds that newly eased telehealth regulations have opened opportunities for Wellspring Case Managers, Peer Support Specialists and Therapists to address some client needs remotely, reducing some of our face-to-face contact.

“We’ve invested in equipment and software to allow some staff to reach out through personal phone calls and web-based therapy sessions to help people cope with their anxiety and fear and to talk with them about ways to stay healthy. Still, most of our clients don’t have transportation and many have complicating physical health conditions. Getting to the store only to find empty shelves is challenging, so our staff is here to get people what they need.”

Ericha Winters, a Wellspring supervisor shares a personal example of how even the phone calls can provide a life-line.

“This week I called a new case management client to offer support,” Winters explains. “Social distancing definitely doesn’t have to mean social isolation. Just talking, and in this case getting to know someone over the phone and providing assurance that we’ll all get through this together is incredibly meaningful.”

In addition to the [case management](#), [peer support](#), and [Crisis Stabilization Programs](#), Wellspring provides [Supportive Housing](#), an [Affordable Housing Program](#) with subsidized rental housing and a [Supportive Employment Program](#). These programs support clients along their individual paths to recovery. Wellspring facilitates community integration by reducing stigma and strengthening personal and neighborhood connections.

For more information or to schedule virtual interviews, please contact Wellspring Development Director, Kimberly Johnson at 502.753.1453 or email: Kim.Johnson@WellspringKY.org .

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