

## **Title: The Impact of COVID-19 on Community Mental Health Resources in the Fredericksburg Region**

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**Abstract:** Previous research has established the adverse effects of globally stressful events on mental health needs and availability of services. Primary care plays an important role in addressing mental health challenges by connecting patients to additional outside resources. Therefore, it is important to understand how these resources have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Objective: To measure the impact of COVID-19 on mental health organizations in the Fredericksburg region. Methods: 75 mental health community resources in the Fredericksburg region were identified and contacted in June 2020. Phone interviews were conducted to determine if they had experienced any of eight stressors, including lack of funding, staffing shortages, increased utilization, underutilization, nonessential status, new virtual services, reduction of services, and new services offered, due to COVID-19. Results: Of the 75 resources contacted, 46 entries remained open, and 2 closed temporarily. 27 could not be reached, possibly due to being overwhelmed or temporarily closed. Among resources that remained open, 94% reported experiencing at least one stressor, with 44% reporting three or more stressors. 91% reported providing services virtually, 38% reported increased caseload, and 35% reported reducing their services. Further analysis revealed that increased caseloads were associated with providing services virtually (chi-square = 7.8, df = 1, p-value = 0.0054). Discussion: Mental health organizations appear to have adapted well throughout the pandemic, as nearly all contacted reported new virtual services. Access to mental health services is increasingly important as the pandemic continues, so understanding structural reasons for organizational changes will have implications for patient care.