

Senior Citizens Struggling to Cope with Emotional Impact of COVID-19

WellQor Behavioral Health launches COVID-19 support programs for Senior Living Communities



Huntington, Mar 18, 2020 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - The outbreak of COVID-19 has created an extremely volatile situation for the residents, staff and family members of Senior Living communities. Under 'normal' circumstances, many seniors and their families already find themselves in stressful situations while navigating the transition to senior living. As media narratives spread like wildfire, blurring the lines between trusted fact and sensationalism, fear and anxiety can become overwhelming for residents, their families, and caregiver staff.

Important measures aimed at preserving the physical health of older adults have been implemented in senior living communities across the nation, however, 'lockdown' style protections have upended crucial social support programs for seniors in need. Mental and emotional health is intrinsically linked to physical health, and isolation from clinical social workers, therapists, and psychologists put residents at risk for debilitating anxiety, severe depression, and self-harm.

Panic is a natural response to fear and uncertainty, but healthcare providers must have mechanisms in place to mitigate the effects of panic and allow their staff access to a functioning workplace. Isolationism has exacerbated the behavioral health issues faced by senior living communities and without licensed professionals such as social workers and psychotherapists on site, senior living communities are ill-equipped to manage a crisis situation. Now, more than ever, we need mental health professionals to help caregivers do their jobs, allow families to feel supported, and help seniors regain a sense of security.

Crisis management in this era of panic has inspired veterans of crisis response to act with innovative solutions. Candace Williams, the Director of Clinician Development at a behavioral healthcare company called WellQor, is at the forefront of crisis management amid the COVID-19 outbreak. She is a licensed clinical social worker, who gained widespread praise for her work leading the Disaster Welfare Inquiry Center, a New York based hotline providing crisis support to the friends and family of the victims of the 9-11 terror attacks. She was given the "Unsung Heroes Award" for her post 9-11 work, and she's set to become an unsung hero once again, as she's developed a suite of unique services through WellQor to help senior living communities deal with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Many providers are scrambling to adapt, but WellQor *already* has an extensive network of licensed

professionals trained specifically in active, supportive, short-term crisis management. These clinicians are mobilizing to administer specific crisis interventions aimed at reaffirming a lost sense of security amongst residents. This involves professional psycho-education and the re-establishment of social support systems for isolated communities. Residents are reassured of their physical health, and perceptions of safety are reconceived in order to provide a healthy and stable living environment.

Community-wide behavioral healthcare is key, and under this new crisis response program, staff is given the proper resources to help themselves and the residents they care for. Crisis care and counseling are administered to employees, ensuring healthy employees are able to maintain a healthy community. Furthermore, in reaching out to the families of residents, clinicians are able to lift the burden currently on community staff, and reduce the stress associated with the isolation of, and risks to, their loved ones.

New isolation measures, however, have jeopardized the ability of many clinicians to deliver much-needed counseling to at-risk employees and residents. A newly launched hotline inspired by Candace's previous work aims to bridge the gap. Video and telephone consultation has become available to the caregivers and staff members of WellQor communities - educating community members on temporary crisis interventions and proper communication. This hotline offers immediate connection with licensed professionals trained specifically in the mental health nuances of senior living communities.

These services counter crises through treatment *and* prevention. A proactive approach to the behavioral health of senior living communities is important to prevent long-term trauma and psychological damage. Without consistent care for the mental health of residents, families, and employees, the trauma associated with a mismanaged crisis could far outlast the duration of COVID-19.

About WellQor

WellQor partners with leading senior living communities to provide comprehensive emotional and cognitive care programs for the entire community. Our trained licensed professionals work on-site at each location, developing long term relationships with individual residents, their families, and staff.





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