

COVID-19 Related News Items - December 2020

Drew Martel is a member:

[Iowa's crisis hotline sees major increase in calls in 2020](#)

Iowa Capital Dispatch

Since the summer, **Drew Martel** said people are increasingly calling the state's crisis hotline, Your Life Iowa. Adults and teens are calling and texting counselors about depression and anxiety. Some are reporting isolation and distress caused by the pandemic. Grief calls are coming from people who lost loved ones to the virus. The number of hotline calls has risen so rapidly since July 2020, they're expected to outpace all of fiscal year 2020, according to data from the Iowa Department of Public Health.

Lisa Seif is a member:

['Collectively out of balance': COVID-19 taking toll on mental as well as physical health](#)

Courier & Press

The holidays are already a difficult time, especially for people who already have issues such as depression, anxiety or substance addictions, said **Lisa Seif, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Licensed Clinical Addiction Counselor**. A private psychotherapist and consultant at Integrity Psychological and Counseling, Seif said the holidays can often magnify depression and anxiety because people compare themselves to others. The COVID-19 pandemic can make it even worse.

Sara Van Tongeren is a member:

[As pandemic stretches on, worry about mental health of elderly grows](#)

Holland Sentinel

Sara Van Tongeren, a clinical social worker in Holland who specializes in helping people through traumatic and unexpected life events, explained that the human body reacts to stressors like fear of the virus and fear of isolation in physical ways, such as not being able to eat or sleep well. "When we are isolated, we experience a stress reaction that occurs on a neurobiological level, so increased excretion in our brain of various stress hormones that can actually trigger a physiological experience like fevers or pain or exhaustion or insomnia," Van Tongeren said.

[UB social work researcher named to national panel to address evictions](#)

University at Buffalo

A University at Buffalo social work researcher has been appointed by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) to its multidisciplinary strategy group that will address the impact of COVID-19 on the eviction crisis confronting millions of Americans. **Kelly Patterson, an associate professor in UB's School of Social Work and an expert in subsidized housing policy**, poverty and economic inequality, is the only social worker on the 21-member panel of stakeholders from government, academia and industry who comprise NASEM's Response and Resilient Recovery Strategic Science Initiative (R3SSI).

[\[Video\] School districts saw unprecedented drop in enrollment during pandemic](#)

60 Minutes

Going back to school this year has been a lesson in patience. Since the surge of COVID cases this fall, many cities, including New York, Detroit and Philadelphia, have suspended or postponed their plans to hold in-person classes. 60 Minutes interviews **social worker Laura Tucker** about their search for the missing students, including in public housing and homeless encampments. “I’ve worked out of my SUV for a while now... yeah all summer long.”

Stacey Henson is a member:

[Drugs of Choice in the Era of COVID-19](#)

[Psychology Today](#)

"Coronavirus has sparked an uptick in drug and alcohol use based on the data we have been tracking," says **Stacey Henson, LCSW, ACSW**, of The Recovery Village. "The most obvious explanation for this trend is the increase in stress and anxiety that has been brought on by the pandemic." While drug and alcohol use appears to be up across the board, the researchers found certain demographic groups to be particularly affected. For instance, young adults showed an alarming increase in recent drug use.

Sam Hickman, executive director of NASW-WV, participated in this event:

[Groups call on West Virginia leaders to be 'a Santa not a Scrooge' on COVID relief](#)

[WVNews](#)

Representatives of West Virginia community organizations delivered a holiday-themed message to Gov. Jim Justice and the state’s congressional representatives during a virtual press conference Wednesday morning. The groups — which included the West Virginia Council of Churches, the West Virginia Sierra Club and the Kanawha County chapter of the NAACP — urged the state’s leaders to “be a Santa, not a Scrooge, on COVID relief.”

[Support Made Available For Educators](#)

[Livingston Enterprise](#)

The Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), in partnership with several statewide organizations, announced the COVID-19 Emotional Support Line is now available for all Tennessee educators.... In May, the COVID-19 Emotional Support Line was created by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, along with the Mental Health Active Response Team (MHART), the Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug, and other Addictions Services (TAADAS), **National Association of Social Workers-TN Chapter (NASW-TN)**, for healthcare workers and first responders who are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

[Pandemic Creates Push for Increased Hospice Caregiver Respite](#)

[Hospice News](#)

The [study](#), conducted between May 15 and June 15, 2020, examined the trajectory of the pandemic during what researchers called a period of transition for hospice providers. Study authors surveyed more than 200 hospice social workers who are members of the **National Association of Social Workers** listserv, as well as social media sites

associated with Social Work Community, Hospice Social Workers, the Society for Social Worker Leadership, Social Workers in Nursing Facilities and Health Care, and the Social Work Hospice and Palliative Care Network.

Margaret Cochran is a member:

[How to Overcome Seasonal Affective Disorder \(Especially During COVID\)](#)

Parentology

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is estimated to affect about 10 million Americans. Traditionally most people feel the effects during winter months, but that's not always the case — especially right now when COVID is wreaking havoc on people's mental health. How can you determine if you or your child may be suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder and how do you overcome it? While SAD is most commonly associated with adults, kids can also fall victim. **Dr. Margaret Cochran, psychotherapist and LCSW** tells Parentology that teens are not immune.

Stacey Henson is a member:

[Parenting With Agoraphobia Is Hard. It's Harder in a Pandemic.](#)

The New York Times

According to **Stacey Henson, a licensed clinical social worker and community outreach coordinator at Orlando Recovery Center in Florida**, navigating the new reality of a pandemic can be challenging for anyone, but especially for those struggling with mental health issues like agoraphobia. "In general, any significant change in our daily coping activities is going to impact us in how we manage our mental health day to day," Henson said. "It causes people to fall back into old behaviors, things that were maybe more comfortable, even if they're not healthier choices for us."

Cynthia Newton is a member:

[In rural Texas, 'they're angry at COVID.' A small-town counselor treats the grieving](#)

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

"Out here, there's all this anger," said **Cynthia N. Newton, a traveling counselor from Comanche** with a weekly radio show and a sturdy Chevy Traverse to help her reach anyone needing mental health treatment across four counties from Hamilton to Eastland. "They're angry at COVID," she said. "They're angry at all the unanswered questions left behind. We all know anger is a stage of grief — that's what we're all experiencing."

[Facing an eviction crisis, school social workers urge families to know McKinney-Vento rights](#)

Port City Daily

This school year approximately 600 identified New Hanover County students are qualifying for McKinney-Vento services. **The federal law protects children without fixed, adequate or regular nighttime residences**, guaranteeing them school stability while their families are without secure housing. While the central protection of the act is to keep children in their school of origin when it's in their best interest, the students are also granted other rights; those include access to school

transportation when requested by the parent, and the ability to immediately enroll in school and participate in all activities without the normally-required documentation.

Kat Geiger is a member:

[Isolation, anxiety, depression: Pandemic exacerbates Nevadans' struggles with mental health](#)

Reno Gazette Journal

Kat Geiger, a licensed clinical social worker and eating disorder specialist, said her office has seen a 300 percent increase in patients seeking service compared to 2019. "A lot of people aren't saying it's the illness itself, it's the isolation and the secondary financial and relationship issues," Geiger said. "COVID expedited us breaking through some barriers with stigma. People who historically haven't accessed mental health services feel desperate enough to access them."

Melissa Preece is a member:

[\[Video\] 'It keeps us busy': Video games help people get through pandemic](#)

KFDA

Mental health experts say a popular Christmas present is helping people cope with COVID-19. They say they're doing a lot more this year than providing casual fun, they're getting some people through the pandemic.... "It keeps us busy and makes us feel wanted and needed," said **Melissa Preece, a licensed clinical social worker.**

Jennifer Welch is a member:

[\[Video\] Battling depression during the holidays made worse by pandemic](#)

WTOC

Clinical social worker with Memorial Health, Jennifer Welch, says getting caught up in traditions can also bring on sadness and even anxiety. She says there's no right way to cope with how someone may be feeling, but she says coming up with new traditions or having someone to talk to can really help. "Leading up to the holidays and we have these expectations for what the holidays are supposed to look like and so managing our expectations around that, acknowledging what we're feeling. Sometimes we don't even know what we're feeling, we become really overwhelmed, the holidays are really stressful, maybe we're used to traditions and celebrating with family members and we don't have them with us any longer," said Welch.

[The Permanency for Audio-Only Telehealth Act: A Matter of Healthcare Equity?](#)

[The National Law Review](#)

According to Dr. Evans, "[a]llowing patients to receive mental health services by audio-only telephone is a matter of health equity for underserved populations and [the American Psychological Association] applauds this important equalizer." Similarly, as described by **Anna Mangum, MSW, MPH, Deputy Director of Programs, National Association of Social Workers,** the Pandemic has, "laid bare the major disparities in health across the nation. Eliminating these disparities must be one of our highest priorities. Making audio-only telehealth permanently available is one of the key mechanisms for advancing this priority."

Sonya Richardson is a member:

[The Zoom Life Is a Journey—Here’s an Exhaustive Guide To Surviving It and Thriving Well + Good](#)

Sonya Richardson, PhD, LCSW, a clinical assistant professor of social work at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, defined the presence of absence as follows: “a deep state of heaviness and separation.” She went on to explain that these feelings often arise when we’re on Zoom because we’re together *virtually* while being separated *physically*. As a consequence, our mirror neurons—a group of brain cells responsible for compassion that are triggered when we’re in a room with others—don’t fire, and we feel a sinking sense of being disconnected.

Shari Botwin is a member:

[\[Video\] Pandemic precautions increase feelings of isolation](#)
WPVI-TV

The safest way to celebrate Christmas is to just spend it with people in your immediate household and virtually with others. **Shari Botwin, LCSW and author of *Thriving After Trauma*** says, "If you were to do a survey and ask people, 'Do you think the holidays are difficult,' nine out of ten would say, 'It's one of the hardest times of the year for me.'" She says many are missing lost loved ones or feeling lonely and when you add pandemic precautions in, it feels like a double whammy.

Daniel Silverman is a member:

[Do you have the 'COVID Blues'?](#)
WKTV

On Monday, we spoke with **Dan Silverman, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker** in Rome, who says the COVID Blues is a real thing, he calls it grieving or burnout but says he's been seeing many patients over the past few months come in for help with pandemic anxiety, "People will come in typically and verbalize the fact that they're frustrated with how they can't do the things that they would normally do, they're tired of wearing masks and social distancing...so it's very clear that they're experiencing what you would call the COVID Blues, I would call it grieving or burnout."

Rachel Ross is a member:

[Meet the people who made school possible in this tough pandemic year](#)
knoxnews.com

Rachel Ross works with children and understands them through the way they process their feelings. "We, as adults, often like for them to talk about how they are feeling. And children don't do that. They use toys, they interact with the world and play therapists are able to see that and understand and communicate through their language versus our language."

Laurie Mazarella is a member:

[Finding the 'happy' in the new year](#)
Cape Cod Times

Laurie Mazarella, a Connecticut licensed clinical social worker in private

practice, shares a similar message and coping method with her patients. “What COVID makes us realize is to take one day at a time,” she said. After the shock of the early days of the pandemic, Mazarella said it was important to help shift the focus to recognizing what we do have now and not what we don’t have. “Yes, we are without traditional graduations, birthdays and other celebrations, but we still have each other.”

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