

Telemedicine Options Available for Community Health Center Patients

(Honesdale, PA, April 28, 2020) ... Wayne Memorial Community Health Center (WMCHC) patients who need to visit a healthcare provider for a chronic or acute issue now have a telehealth option, a visit via phone or video.

“It’s our responsibility not only to treat individuals with COVID-19, but also to help maintain the overall health and wellbeing of all patients under our care,” stated Frederick Jackson, executive director. “While our medical offices remain open, we are pleased to be able to offer a telehealth visit for applicable situations.”

WMCHC operates primary care offices in Honesdale, Waymart, Carbondale, Hamlin, Tafton, Lake Como, Forest City and Lords Valley. It also has pediatric offices in Sterling, as well as Honesdale and Waymart, and women’s health services in Honesdale, Carbondale and Lords Valley. All offices offer telehealth services. Patients are asked to call ahead to discuss telemedicine alternatives for their particular case.

WMCHC’s Behavioral Health office in Honesdale also offers telehealth but on a limited basis.

James Cruse, MD, medical director, WMCHC explained “there are a variety of connectivity options for patients. During the crisis, phone-only visits, without video, are allowable based on a patient’s insurance.” As of early May, that includes Medicare.

Patient issues appropriate for telemedicine include follow ups for chronic problems, such as reviewing lab reports for diabetes or high cholesterol, and even blood pressure follow ups if the patient can check their blood pressure at home. “Many new complaints such as colds and coughs, rashes, headaches and joint pain can also be done via video,” said Dr. Cruse, “but if the provider feels the patient needs to be seen in-person after a tele-appointment, he or she will be asked to come in—sometimes as quickly as the same day.”

Dr. Cruse said health concerns requiring a physical exam such as ear pain, acute abdominal pain, shortness of breath, chest pain, and joint sprains or injuries will be seen at the office.

In-office visits are still being routinely scheduled, although patients are now screened for possible COVID-19 exposure. Patients who do come to the office in person will be required to wear a mask upon arrival. Only the patient will be allowed in the office with some exceptions

made for individuals who need special assistance such as the elderly, children or those with a mobility issue.

Reiterating that all WMCHC medical offices are open for business—WMCHC dental services in Honesdale and Lords Valley are open only for emergencies— Jackson commended the staff. “They really are front-liners and are to be appreciated. In some cases, they are risking their own health to take care of others.”

WMCHC is a federally qualified health center clinically affiliated with Wayne Memorial Health System, Inc. For more information and office locations, visit wmchc.net or call 570-253-8390.

Photo: James Cruse, MD, a family physician at Honesdale Family Health Center, is shown conducting a video telehealth visit. All WMCHC offices are offering some form of telehealth as an option during the COVID-19 pandemic.