

Katherine J. Bell, PsyD
Youth Services Supervisor

April 16, 2020

To our Mansfield families and community,

We're not really counting what day of social distancing we're on, but we do want you to know that we're still here at Youth Services to help! Throughout this time apart, we have, and will, continue to work with our Town of Mansfield leadership, the Eastern Highlands Health District, the Mansfield and Region 19 Boards of Education, and state and federal governing agencies to help ensure safety in our community.

We've tried to be creative to keep meeting the ongoing and changing needs of our youth and families during this time of unsteadiness. We want to emphasize that this really is NOT a time of "new normal" as we're in the middle of something that the world hasn't experienced in our lifetimes. While it IS our "new for-right-now", it's something that will have an end. We don't know how long it will last and when we will truly be able to start to rebuild a "new normal". However, in the meantime, we're still here for you during your "new for-right-now".

Youth Services remains focused on responding to the mental health and concrete needs of our community in the safest ways we can.

- We're here support you and your youth by phone through our usual office numbers, email, and now through online video appointments during our regular business hours
- We're working as a part of our larger Human Services department to help families with food insecurity access the food pantry, CT's The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and Foodshare.
- Both Mansfield Human Services and Mansfield Youth Services have pulled together and organized a variety of links and information related to federal, state, and local agencies that are being responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic including supports for finances, nutrition, positive enrichment activities, distance learning, and mental health.
<http://www.mansfieldct.gov/humanservices> & <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/youthservices>
- Youth Services is putting out daily content through our facebook pages
<https://www.facebook.com/MansfieldYouthServices> &
<http://facebook.com/MansfieldAdvocatesForChildren>
with updates, self-care support, mindfulness activities, readings from our favorite books, and things that are worth a good laugh. Follow us there and subscribe to our [Mansfield Youth Services YouTube channel](#) (just search for Mansfield Youth Services) to make sure you don't miss a post!
- We're partnering with Mansfield Board of Education's Food Services team to distribute crafts/activity kits on a weekly basis during the school meals program.

We've gone virtual for some existing and new groups. In order to best keep those groups organized and protect privacy we're asking that you contact the identified staff for the meeting link.

- New weekly virtual drop-in group for parents on Fridays at 8pm (Fri-YAY), run by Youth Services' very own Mansfield Mom, Sarah Dufresne. The link can be found on our facebook events page.
- The Out of the Blue new mom's group has gone online and continues to run the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 7pm (contact Sarah Dufresne – DufresneS@mansfieldct.org)

- Mansfield Youth Pride (MY Pride) middle school group is meeting online for its usual scheduled days on the first Monday of the month at 3pm (contact Katie Bell – BellKJ@mansfieldct.org)
- New middle school youth online “drop in” group Monday April 27 3-4 pm (Contact Danielle Annibalini AnnibaliniDN@mansfieldct.org or Kelly McKenney McKenneyKL@mansfieldct.org)
- New elementary school aged online “drop in” groups Monday May 11 3pm-3:30pm for grades K-2 and 4-4:30 pm for grades 3 & 4. (Contact Danielle Annibalini AnnibaliniDN@mansfieldct.org or Kelly McKenney McKenneyKL@mansfieldct.org)

Finally, and most importantly, WE'RE LISTENING! If there's something that you need, we're here to try and figure it out with you. Don't hesitate to reach out to us. We know things are far from normal right now and we want to hear from you, and what you need.

We're doing what we can, where we can, as are so many other folks in the world. We take comfort in seeing all of those good things and knowing that we're not alone, and neither are you. We're thinking a lot about that Mister Rogers quote, “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’”

We want to encourage you all as a community to recognize that we are ALL helpers. We all have something to offer to the world even when we are in the midst of our own messy lives. We all have at least some small thing that we can do to help others in our close circles or our larger communities. We're so thankful for all of our helpers right now: the ones who are keeping our community safe physically and emotionally, the ones who are putting their lives on the line trying to help heal others, the ones who are making sure folks are fed, the ones who are keeping the grocery stores open and stocked and clean, the ones who are delivering things, the ones who are advocating on behalf of the most vulnerable to protect them, the ones who are making sure that we have places of peace to exist in, and the ones who are reaching out to check in and connect. Even if the only thing you can do to help is to stay home, THANK YOU. Stay home, stay safe.

Be well, stay well,

Katherine J. Bell, PsyD
Youth Services Supervisor
Pronouns: she/her/hers
(860)429-3319
BellKJ@MansfieldCT.org