

A PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY DURING COVID-19

The suggestions below are meant to help you, the service provider, keep the person, your client, at the center of your work during this critical time. If you're finding it difficult to create a safe and responsive space for your clients or to be fully present for them, make sure to refer to "**Self-Care During COVID-19**" for some reminders about healthy self-care.

Create safety for your clients.

- Be consistent and on time. Maintain a regular schedule with your clients.
- Listen when clients share unrelated or difficult feelings, acknowledge how they're feeling and thank them for opening up to you, then gently redirect to the purpose of your meeting.
- Connect clients with **resources to meet their basic needs**.
- Know the warning signs of a mental health crisis and where to refer locally.

Build and maintain trust.

- Be honest about the time and resources you do and do not have to support a client.
- Set your limits and stick to them.
- Follow through with any support or connections you've offered.
- Use proper phone and/or video conference etiquette and show kindness.
- Know your **biases** and weaknesses.

Collaborate with your clients.

- Treat clients as equals, use the "golden rule."
- Even if someone is facing an impossible circumstance, gently hold them accountable to their goals and plans, enlisting their insight into how to realistically adjust plans as needed.
- Simplify communication and expectations. Less is more.

Empower your clients.

- Normalize and affirm client's experiences, fears and concerns.
- Help clients find positive meaning and "silver linings", but avoid toxic positivity.
- If clients seem to need more relational support, help them brainstorm meaningful social connections to support them during this time.

Create space for your client's voice and choice.

- Don't make assumptions about how your client wants to respond to their crisis. Take time and ask them.
- Provide options and ask which option the client would like to choose. It's important for everyone, including your clients, to experience a sense of control during this time.
- Keep your own emotions, fears and biases in check. It's easy to allow your own experience to impact your ability to listen and hear your client's voice over your own. If this is difficult for you, try practicing meditation five minutes a day to train your thoughts to slow down.

