For Immediate Release
March 25, 2020

WHAT: WellFully COVID-19 Status
WHERE: WellFully Premier Adolescent Care Center
WHY: to keep the community informed about WellFully’s plan for the COVID-19 situation

WellFully prepared for COVID-19 situation

Rapid City, SD - With the number growing of positive cases of COVID-19 across South Dakota and the first confirmed case in the Black Hills having been cited in Pennington County, the leadership and staff of the WellFully Premium Adolescent Care Center (PACC) in Rapid City are working daily to protect the at-risk youth in their care from the virus.

At WellFully, steps have been taken to help shield our staff as well as our adolescent clients from being exposed to this highly contagious virus.

Knowledge is the first step in the battle, so the leadership team has been meeting daily to review the current status of the virus locally and nationwide, as well as the procedures that are being set in place by the local government, medical and business community. A team has been meeting on an ongoing basis to assess how we’re doing, addressing any needs but also planning for potential next steps. Because what we know today can change very quickly and with that, would come new steps and processes we would need to implement. That information is then being shared with the entire WellFully staff. In a recent email, WellFully CEO Burke Eilers shared “We will continue to put updates out as needed so that you know what steps are being taken but also what is going on behind the scenes.”

A number of preventative steps that have been put into motion to stop the introduction and/or spread of the virus to the PACC. Staff and youth alike are continually reminded to wash their hands, and hand sanitizer has been distributed throughout the building to staff members. Social distancing is in full effect, with the youth no longer sharing bedrooms, and seating spread out at meals, group therapy and classroom sessions. All off-ground activities such as field trips have been suspended.

As of March 16th, WellFully began limiting access to its facility. All non-essential appointments have been cancelled and no visitors will be allowed into the facility without a prior appointment. To make an appointment, please contact your child’s counselor or the appropriate staff member directly by calling 718-4870.

WellFully is the only facility for adolescents of its kind in western South Dakota. While we will not take any out-of-state admissions, WellFully will continue to accept new youth clients. However, to ensure proper distancing, a cap of residential clients has been placed on both the Addiction Recovery Unit (ARU) and the Behavioral Health Care Unit (BHCU).

As we accept new residents, the admission process will include a pre-health screening questionnaire, and will be mindful of the point of origin in regards to COVID-19 cases in that area. “While we must continue to be careful,” Eilers told the staff, “We must not lose our social consciousness about this situation. We cannot turn away an at-risk boy or girl, struggling with addiction or behavioral issues who has no place else to go.”

In an email to staff, regarding the importance to continue accepting new youth, Eilers stated “On Monday the Governor issued an Executive order limiting a number of items. She also indicated several times that this situation could be going on for eight weeks or more. The state of South Dakota and the kids that are in need of safe shelter or who are struggling with addiction just can’t wait for help, and the livelihood of our employees depend on our services.”

WellFully COO Rich Cartney also reminded staffers to consider their home situations. “If you have kids home from school for 2 weeks, who would watch them while you came to work? If your babysitter was suddenly not available, what is your backup plan? What would you do for food if grocery stores closed for 2 weeks? Do you have pets that would need to be cared for?”

“The last thing we want in this situation is to create a panic” commented WellFully CEO Burke Eilers. If our staff and visitors to WellFully maintain the common-sense guidelines offered by the experts in this field, we should all be able to get through this.