Dear Partners and Providers,

I am writing with two important updates.

First, Southern Virginia Mental Health Institute (SVMHI) in Danville currently has 9 patients who have tested positive for COVID-19. Additionally, 4 staff members are known to be positive at this time, and are away from SVMHI isolating and receiving treatment as needed. Several months ago, SVMHI implemented VDH recommendations to develop an admissions unit to quarantine new individuals upon arrival for 14 days, and created a system to cohort existing patients into hot, warm and cold zones. However, the community spread in Virginia is making it more difficult to control the spread of infections. **Taking into consideration the recommendations from VDH, I am directing that admissions be ceased temporarily to SVMHI until further notice to ensure safety of existing patients and staff.** DBHDS is working with VDH to conduct Point Prevalence Survey (PPS) testing of all current patients and staff and will be working closely with VDH to develop a plan to reopen SVMHI as soon as it is deemed safe to do so.

Second, I want to ensure your awareness about what we anticipate will be a challenging weekend for Virginia’s state psychiatric beds. State hospitals are currently running at 98 percent of their utilization. The geriatric beds are over capacity which requires the hospitals to make their adult beds available for the overflow. COVID-19 outbreaks have also caused admissions to be temporarily placed on hold at Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute (SWVMHI) in Marion. We are watching other hospitals with smaller outbreaks very closely as positive cases rise in all five Virginia regions.

**As a result, there will likely be delays in admissions over the weekend as we anticipate all of the available state beds will soon be filled.** As always, we are *not denying admissions* except in cases related to COVID-19, but are instead delaying admissions if state hospital staff need to work to make a bed available. With any delays in admissions to state hospitals, providers are reminded to follow guidelines issued in response to Governor Northam’s Executive Order 70. The guidance can be found [here](#).

While these times of extremely high census are incredibly hard for us to manage, we understand the great strain this also causes to our partners. We will continue to discharge individuals who are ready to return home, and we will work diligently and quickly to make new beds available for any individuals whose admissions have been delayed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your partnership, especially during these extraordinary times.

Sincerely,

Alison G. Land