



Merakey's Response to COVID-19 – Updated March 19, 2020

These are challenging and uncertain times for all of us. But, at Merakey, our commitment to serving the most vulnerable is unwavering. As the situation continues to evolve, our staff is working around the clock to adapt to the changing needs of our communities. During this difficult time, we want you to be assured that we are doing everything we can to care for those we serve and those *who* serve – our dedicated employees.

COVID-19 is changing how we work. Over the past week, we've expanded our capacity to provide telehealth and other virtual services, and where required, we've closed some of our day programs. We are collaborating with our payers, county offices, local school districts, and provider advocacy organizations on a daily basis – problem solving together as new issues arise.

Putting our heart and soul into exceptional care and services is more than our tagline and it's never been so important. Please check back for regular updates on how we are responding to COVID-19 and take good care of yourselves and your families. We're in this together.

Are programs and offices at Merakey closing?

We are constantly evaluating each of our programs to determine whether services can: safely continue on-site; transition to virtual using available technology; or must temporarily close. Regardless of the program and location being evaluated, the health and safety of individuals, families, staff, and the broader community are the primary focus of our decision-making processes.

Over the last several days, our team contacted individuals and families as quickly as possible to provide information about the status of Merakey programs. Unfortunately, some of our programs had to make the very difficult decision to temporarily stop providing services. However, before closing, each of these programs developed alternate plans to ensure continuity of care for those we serve.

If you are receiving services, or have a loved one receiving services at Merakey, and you haven't been contacted about the status of your services, please contact that location directly to inquire.

What is Merakey doing to protect the safety of individuals in programs that are staying open?

At locations where we are able to remain open and provide services, precautions we are taking include:

- Limiting the number of individuals in waiting areas or other large meeting areas.
- Monitoring the health of everyone several times a day to confirm they are not displaying any symptoms of the virus or flu.



- Providing hand sanitizer gel throughout the building.
- Practicing social distancing by displaying resources and reminders in the waiting areas.
- Posting signs throughout the building to remind everyone to regularly wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

If programs are not providing services at Merakey buildings and staff members aren't traveling to consumer homes, how can services continue?

Merakey is working with all insurance companies to determine where Telehealth services can be provided in place of face-to-face services. Telehealth allows staff and consumers to communicate via telephone and / or video rather than in-person. In the coming days, Merakey staff will contact individuals who are approved for Telehealth services with more details.

If someone wants to make a donation to Merakey in response to the effects of COVID-19, how can they?

Many of the individuals Merakey serves are among most vulnerable to the devastating physical, social, and economic effects of COVID-19. Merakey is deeply committed to protecting those we serve during this time of crisis. If you'd like to contribute to Merakey's COVID-19 Relief Fund—helping us to purchase critical items like sanitizers, disinfectants, and personal protective equipment—please [click here](#).

As a reminder, below are steps that everyone should take to avoid getting the virus

- **Take the same commonsense approach that you already do for viruses like the flu.** The federal government recommends that health care professionals use the same strategies and procedures associated with any virus, such as the flu, including following infection control procedures.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
 - Stay home when you are sick.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- **Post and share information from the CDC.** Below are links to the CDC website providing a fact sheet about COVID-19 and the prevention of the spreading of germs.
 - English:
 - [CDC Fact Sheet on the Coronavirus](#)
 - [CDC Guidance on Stopping the Spread of Germs](#)
 - Español:
 - [Hoja de datos de los CDC sobre el coronavirus](#)
 - [Guía de los CDC para detener la propagación de gérmenes](#)



- **Perform routine environmental cleaning.** Merakey is increasing the cleaning at our locations as a preventative measure. You may also want to routinely clean surfaces that you frequently touch, such as your workstation. CDC guidance is that usual cleaning agents are sufficient for cleaning and no additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.

What should I do if I feel sick?

According to the CDC, anyone who feels sick should:

- Seek medical advice — Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.