



Public Health
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Wellesley Health Department

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Leonard Morse Hospital in Natick will close its Emergency Room on October 25, 2020

Residents urged to continue to seek mental health and other health services

9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline bill signed into law

On September 8, 2020 via a letter to the public, Andrew Harding, Chief Executive Officer, MetroWest Medical Center announced they will close the Emergency Room (ER) at Leonard Morse Hospital as of Sunday, October 25, 2020; this closure includes the psychiatric unit inside the ER, as well as inpatient medical and surgical services. Mr. Harding stated, "We envision the Leonard Morse Hospital campus becoming a unique behavioral health specialty center dedicated to the mental health of our community for child, adolescent, adult and geriatric psychiatric care. Behavioral health is a challenge in our community, and it is critical we optimize our services to help address the issue." Leonard Morse Hospital is part of MetroWest Medical Center which includes Framingham Union Hospital.

Those seeking emergency behavioral/mental health services at Leonard Morse Hospital may be diverted to Framingham Union Hospital or other nearby hospitals including Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital in Needham or other hospitals that offer emergent and crisis mental health intervention.

In addition to hospitals, those seeking evaluations, referrals, services and resources may contact providers such as mental health centers, area clinicians, web-based services such as telehealth, dedicated hotlines, text resources, etc. A new resource to assist those who may contemplate suicide is the forthcoming 9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline.

*On October 20, 2020, a 9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline bill was signed into law. "The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, introduced by Representative Seth Moulton, a Salem Democrat, calls for the three-digit number to be implemented nationwide by July 2022.

The law represents "the single-most important development to reduce suicide in America to date," said Chuck Ingoglia, president and chief executive of the National Council for Behavioral Health, in a statement from Moulton's office. "For the first time, a dedicated three-digit number will now be available for those experiencing a mental health crisis," Ingoglia said. "This is especially important in the wake of increased isolation, fear, grief, and substance use due to COVID-19."

The existing [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is a 10-digit number — **1-800-273-TALK** — and that will remain in effect until the new three-digit number is in place, according to the [Federal Communications Commission](#).

*Source: The Boston Globe, October 20, 2020, by Emily Sweeney and Jeremy C. Fox

Local mental health resources (including an anonymous and confidential screening) can be found on the Wellesley Health Department website; Health Department social workers are available to assist residents with mental health and other needs:

<https://wellesleyma.gov/204/Mental-Health-Resources>

<https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/211/Mental-Health-Resource-Guide>

And on the Wellesley Public Schools website:

<https://wellesleyps.org/whs/students/whs-available-supports/community-mental-health-resources/>

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