



**The Effects of COVID-19 on BRiDGES | The Madison County Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Inc.**  
 How to Continue Providing Hope, Strengthening Families, and Building Healthy Communities Amidst a Global Pandemic

**INTRODUCTION**

BRiDGES, the Madison County Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Inc. is an organization devoted to improving the quality of life by providing advocacy and services to the Madison County community, the workplace, families and individuals affected by addiction and substance abuse. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought fast-moving and unexpected variables for which BRiDGES was not prepared for and they therefore had to adapt.

**CHANGES**

In order to do their part to keep the Madison County community healthy, BRiDGES closed its physical office location. Likewise, the coronavirus limited large groups from gathering. These change forced the company to find a new way to provide all of their resources, support groups, trainings, and projects. Similarly, BRiDGES serves an already vulnerable population within Madison County whose existing issues were likely exacerbated by these difficult times of isolation and grief.

**CONTINUATION OF RESOURCES**

Although many of the BRiDGES programs were not operating out of their physical space, most of their services and supports were delivered via various tele-health platforms, Zoom, and telephone. Support groups continued to meet frequently via the internet, and mobile crisis services became available. BRiDGES also began to offer free, web-based meditation and yoga classes so that the people of Madison County were able to virtually practice self-care, something that became especially important during this time of isolation. Finally, the BRiDGES staff could still be reached via telephone and their regular office number was programmed with a list of further instructions.



**SUICIDE PREVENTION WALK**

The Suicide Prevention Coalition within BRiDGES hosts an annual Suicide Prevention Walk each fall. The inability to gather in large groups prohibited BRiDGES from planning an in person walk. In order to adapt, BRiDGES spent the summer planning a virtual suicide prevention walk and fundraiser for the people of Madison County to participate in throughout the entire month of September in order to honor victims of suicide and suicide loss.

**CONCLUSION**

The coronavirus pandemic caused many people to feel isolated and grieve the loss of their “normal.” However, by providing continuous resources and ways for the people of Madison County to stay connected and stay healthy, BRiDGES was able to help its community stay strong and resilient.

“BRiDGES Council on Alcoholism & Substance Abuse.” *Bridges-Council*, <https://www.bridgescouncil.org>. Accessed 20 July 2020.