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THE WEATHER, BEVERLY HILLS

☁ Friday	84° 66°
☀ Saturday	80° 61°
☀ Sunday	75° 69°
☁ Monday	72° 58°
☀ Tuesday	73° 59°
☀ Wednesday	77° 62°
☀ Thursday	80° 63°

BHPD Confiscates Nearly \$3 Million in EDD Fraud Arrests

BY BIANCA HEYWARD

Over the last two weeks, the Beverly Hills Police Department (BHPD) has arrested 44 individuals within the City in connection with Employment Development Department (EDD) fraud and identity theft. The arrests yielded a total of 129 fraudulent EDD debit cards with a value of over \$2.5 million, more than \$289,000 in U.S. currency and seven handguns found on the suspects' persons or in their vehicles.

The Courier first broke the story that EDD fraud is impacting the City in its Sept. 11 issue.

Subsequently, BHPD released a statement on Sept. 16 providing additional details about the investigations. "Earlier this month, the Beverly Hills Police Department learned criminals were fraudulently obtaining EDD benefits loaded onto EDD debit cards using stolen identities. The monetary

value placed on the cards by EDD can be as high as \$20,000. Cardholders are able to withdraw up to \$1,000 per day, per card. Suspects have traveled primarily from out of state to obtain these fraudulent EDD cards in California. The suspects will most often have numerous EDD cards in their possession with other people's identities, along with large amounts of cash. They will then use the cards to lease short-term rentals, rent luxury vehicles, dine at restaurants and purchase high-end merchandise," said the statement.

In California, the EDD allows individuals eligible for Unemployment Insurance, Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave to receive payments in the form of a Bank of America debit card. The card can be used to make purchases and withdraw cash. The EDD also offers Digital Cards—a prepaid Visa debit card—similar to the physical card option. Both forms of EDD cards are being targeted by individuals in Beverly Hills and throughout the county and state.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the EDD has paid out more than \$81.8 billion in unemployment benefits since March. A Sep. 10 report released by the Department shows a startling sudden influx in initial unemployment claims from recent weeks.

(Fraud continues on page 9)



Merchants in Beverly Hills are taking measures against EDD fraud

Counseling During COVID-19 in Beverly Hills

BY SAMUEL BRASLOW

The days of lying on a chaise longue and unloading secrets onto a bespectacled, pipe-smoking gentleman in a three-piece suit are long gone. As COVID-19 has disrupted the traditional therapeutic model, the Maple Counseling Center in Beverly Hills has turned to virtual platforms. After months of adjusting to this remote reality, the Center is contemplating what the future of therapy will look like for them and for the field at large.

Its services have never been more critical. The Centers for Disease Control released a survey in August showing that over 40 percent of adults reported experiencing mental health challenges related to the pandemic, including anxiety and depression.

The Maple Counseling Center has operated out of Beverly Hills for nearly five decades, starting as a response to rising drug use in Beverly Hills Unified School District

in the late '60s. The Center continues to offer services within the district, but has expanded since then to provide services for all age ranges.

"Services for cradle to grave, if you will," CEO Marcy Kaplan explained to the Courier. "We have programs for very young children and families and we provide counseling services all the way up through older adults."

In addition to its school programs and work with partner agencies, the Center performs between 500 to 550 sessions per week, Kaplan said. Its mandate also encompasses a training element. "We have a large training program for the next generation of mental health professionals, and that includes graduate and postgraduate students and marriage and family therapy, social work, and clinical psychology," Kaplan said.

(COVID-19 continues on page 12)

High Holidays COVID-19 Report FAQs

BY ANA FIGUEROA

As of this week, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) reports 257,271 positive cases of COVID-19 across all areas of L.A. County, and a total of 6,324 deaths. Nearly 70 percent of all cases have occurred in people under the age of 50. In the City of Beverly Hills, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 is 655.

In anticipation of the upcoming Jewish High Holidays, Public Health has issued guidelines for maintaining the health and safety of participants in religious observances.

Among the important information set forth in "What You Need to Know COVID-19 Jewish High Holidays FAQ" is the following: (High Holidays continues on page 13)

(COVID-19 continued from page 1)

COVID-19 disrupted both the Center's clinical services and the training program, forcing the Center to abruptly shut down in March.

Dr. Marianne Callahan the Center's Clinical and Program Director who oversees the training, told the Courier that the interns in March benefited from having prior relationships with their patients, supervisors, and each other.

"They went into a different mode, a different format for doing what they had been doing, but they weren't starting from zero," she said.

But in August, a new class of 42 interns joined the Center at a time of unprecedented change in the field with no established routine or relationships to anchor them. Most of them had the benefit of coming from graduate school, though, where they became familiar with remote learning.

"They're very familiar with the remote platforms," Callahan said. "Their classes are being taught over Zoom, and they know that this is the reality, but I think it's also a very, very far cry from what they had expected to be doing when they envisioned themselves starting out their clinical work, seeing their first clients."

The new approach to therapy also necessitated a new approach to training. For every class prior, interns would conduct sessions in the Center itself. Working remotely, they now had to run sessions from their own homes. Callahan reviewed with the interns how to establish a professional

appearance in the room where they would conduct their sessions and reemphasized the importance of maintaining standards despite working from home.

Additionally, using feedback from the previous class of interns, Callahan offered practical advice to the incomers—simple, hard-earned tips like having a backup plan if technology fails, such as completing the session over the phone, or resending a video conference link the day of the session.

After the initial scramble of adjusting to an entirely remote therapeutic model, the Center began to see a potential silver lining—one that could carry over long after the pandemic subsides. Without the logistical hurdles of commuting or finding an available room, Kaplan and Callahan found the new model more accessible.

"When we started being able to take in new clients, we realized that it was a different game altogether to start new clients remotely and only remotely—people that would never actually walk in the doors of our center," Callahan said. Even without actively promoting the Center farther afield, people who live outside of a "reasonable driving distance" began reaching out, according to Callahan. Additionally, she said more people have begun requesting multiple sessions per week without the constraints of traveling to a physical office.

On the flip side, patients who had left the state to go to school or return home soon found that they could not continue with the Center, even remotely. "There are laws pertaining to the practice of therapy that vary

from state to state," Callahan explained—a reality that the Center never had to confront in pre-COVID times.

Kaplan acknowledged the limits of the technology's accessibility. "There are, for example, older adults who are not comfortable with technology or don't have the technology, or don't want to use the technology," she said. "We also know, as we see people from other communities that might not have internet capabilities or technology, [teletherapy] might not be an option. There's so much we don't know yet."

The transition to teletherapy has not been without its cost.

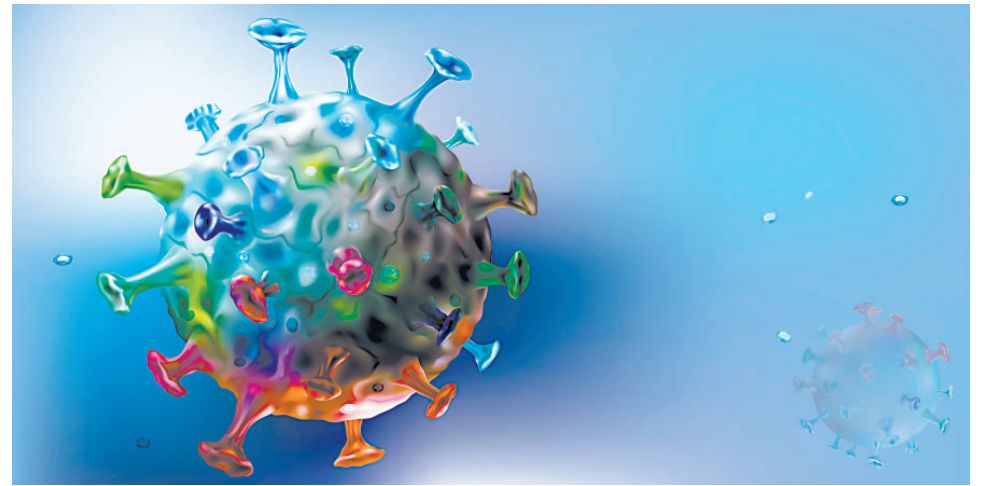
"We had to purchase the platforms that our counselors use to do the sessions, and initially looking at it and determining costs, it didn't seem so bad: a month, two months," said Kaplan. "Right now, we're six months into this. It is costly."


This, coupled with the economic ramifications of the virus, has put the Center in a tight financial situation. Even while offering affordable services at a sliding scale, the Maple Counseling Center earns a substantial portion of its revenue from patient fees. "There are a lot of people who do not have an income right now because they lost their jobs," said Kaplan, "so their fees are being set quite low."

"The demand is up, the costs are up, and the income is down," she said. "It's a challenging time."

As the Center looks to a future that integrates in-person therapy and teletherapy—a future that balances the disadvantages of each with their respective benefits—they will have to find new ways of accounting for the additional costs.

"That's going to be a huge and ongoing need." ●






FREE CLASSES!

Young Innovators Workshop
Class Begins: Monday, October 5
For ages 8-16 yrs

Virtual Gardening
Class Begins: Thursday, September 24
For ages 13 yrs & up

Improv Theater & Games
Class Begins:

Tuesday, September 22 For ages 7-12 yrs	Tuesday, September 29 For ages 13-17 yrs	Tuesday, October 6 For ages 18 yrs & up
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COMMUNITY SERVICES

TO REGISTER

beverlyhills.org/bhrec

For more information, call 310.285.6850

metro.net/eatshopplay

Stay local. Shop local.

Keep the entrepreneurial spirit alive in Beverly Hills. Businesses are open or have recently reopened near the future Wilshire/La Cienega Station.

<p>EAT</p> <p>Boss Sushi 210 S La Cienega Bl 310.659.5612 bossushi.com > Outdoor dining, reservation recommended > Call to order take-out > Delivery via Grubhub</p> <p>Tutt'a Post' Trattoria 235 S La Cienega Bl 310.652.2992 tuttaposttrattoria.com > Take-out and delivery only</p> <p>Beverly Hills Liquor & Wine 8318 Wilshire Bl 323.655.9995 beverlyhillsliquorandwine.com > Take-out and delivery</p> <p>SHOP</p> <p>Dr. Newman Optometry 8314 Wilshire Bl, Unit A 323.653.4078 drnewmanoptometry.com > Open by appointment only</p>	<p>Beverly Wilshire Dry Cleaners 8302 Wilshire Bl 323.653.0525 > Open for business > Delivery available</p> <p>Wilshire Le Doux Pharmacy 8536 Wilshire Bl, Unit 101 310.657.4090 wilshireledouxpharmacy.com > Delivery available</p> <p>PLAY</p> <p>Hot 8 Yoga 8383 Wilshire Bl #75 310.986.6420 hot8yoga.com/beverlyhills > Classes on-demand > Outdoor classes</p> <p>Pure Barre Beverly Hills 231 S La Cienega Bl 424.204.9722 purebarre.com/location/beverly-hills-ca > Livestream classes</p>
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