Although the doors on the building are closed, Utah State Student Health and Wellness is continuing to meet the needs of students while keeping patients and staff safe using creative solutions. Through improved screening techniques, flexibility with telemedicine and phone appointments, and in-office visits; students can access care from counselors, nutritionists, providers, and physical therapists.

Healthcare providers work to prevent and cure illnesses every day, but the virus that causes COVID-19 was found to be more virulent and to spread more easily. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), “The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).”

USU President Noelle Cockett announced via email on March 12 that all classes would move to online learning in response to the pandemic. On March 19 it was advised that employees and others on campus continue to practice self-distancing and working remotely as possible to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the campus community.

Normally, the Health Center accepts walk-in appointments for certain types of illnesses or injuries. In light of combating the spread the coronavirus, walk-in appointments are no longer available. Every patient prior to having an appointment is screened to ascertain risk for COVID-19 based on travel, contact with anyone quarantined, and any symptoms they may have. Based on this information, the patient is set-up with a telemedicine, phone, or an in-office visit.

“The silver lining to the telemedicine and social distancing cloud is observing how gracious, understanding, and helpful my USU patients are under these added stressors,” said Beth Booton, Nurse Practitioner at the Health Center. “They seem to be able to enthusiastically stretch and jump in to making the appointments work well for all of us.”

For patients with symptoms of COVID-19, the severity of the illness is assessed via telemedicine. Based on the severity of the symptoms, the patient is directed to resources for testing and when indicated, to immediate evaluation at the emergency room or other health care provider. Using telemedicine services for evaluation and screening of patients helps to ensure that patients with any symptoms of COVID-19 are not admitted into the clinic. Proper steps are taken in cleaning the center, personal protective equipment, such as gloves, masks, gowns, and goggles are used when evaluating patients. Because of these measures, the health center continued serving the medical needs of its patients while maintaining their safety.

“I think overall I preferred the phone appointments,” said Hannah Paxton, a student at USU, “Going to the doctor's office makes me nervous. I was very appreciative of this service too, as I am at a higher risk for the COVID-19 because of taking blood thinners. I was grateful that I was able to set appointments easily, and feel like my needs were being addressed in a quick time. I was really impressed with the way the health center adapted and came up with new ideas to help their students so quickly, and really found an effective way to continue with treatments.” Many USU students are no longer living on campus or near Logan. Telemedicine services offer these students an opportunity to be evaluated, whether this be meeting with a counselor, evaluating for an illness, a medication that needs to be refilled, or other need.

Any students that have questions or want to make an appointment can call the USU Student Health and Wellness Center by dialing 435-797-1660.