



## **Reach Out to Bring Healing and Hope this Holiday Season**

It is no secret that 2020 has been a challenging year. And while many of us are looking to the holidays with a sense of relief and hope for the new year, the truth is that our community is dealing with a public health crisis beyond the current COVID-19 pandemic. This holiday season, our community is facing the challenges of mental health issues, increased cases of domestic violence and child abuse, alongside heightened depression and anxiety. That is why we are calling on the entire community to participate in “Reach Out FW” on Monday, December 21. Now, more than ever, is the time to reach out to your neighbors, loved ones, and family members outside your household to check in on their well-being.

Just this week, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported on the lingering effects of [grief brought on by COVID-19](#) and the toll it has taken. The Fort Worth Police Department has also reported the increase in cases of domestic abuse, and we are seeing [increases in suicide attempts by youth](#). Fort Worth has also seen, and we have heard firsthand, reports of rising anxiety and depression throughout our community. The extra morgues that have recently arrived in Fort Worth have been largely reported to be in response to rising COVID-19 deaths. The grim truth is they are also here because of the rising numbers of homicides and delayed funerals.

As the Mayor of Fort Worth and the CEO of the second-largest mental health center in Texas, we felt compelled to call out this sad reality and start an honest conversation around the importance of mental health. Not because we need more depressing news – but because we must face this public health crisis together, as a community. It is true that we must all remain vigilant in maintaining our public health measures to keep COVID-19 at bay. But we can no longer ignore the other public health crises that are being brought on by the isolation, fear, and economic disruption caused by this pandemic.

This holiday season let’s push back against the darkness together. It may seem simple, but it is the basic act of human connection and compassion that has been lost in this year’s virus response. Leave a note on your neighbor’s front door, call your relative that lives alone, reach out to your friend that you have not been able to see recently and ask how they are really doing. Visit [www.fortworthtexas.gov/ReachOutFW](http://www.fortworthtexas.gov/ReachOutFW) for a list of resources to share – please know you are not alone.

Brighter days are ahead and, eventually, this virus will cease to dominate our lives. Let’s help each other begin the new year more connected and more hopeful. Who can you reach out to and ask – Are you ok? How can I help? It may seem simple – but it just may save a life.

*During these uncertain times, if you need someone to talk to about your mental health, please call or text the MHMR ICARE Call Center, 817-335-3022. We have trained mental health professionals available 24/7 who can assist you. Your mental health is important to us, and we are here to help.*

**Mayor Betsy Price**  
Fort Worth, Texas

**Susan Garnett**  
CEO, MHMR of Tarrant County