First Lady Casey DeSantis Announces Nearly $2 Million Emergency Grant to Address Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders in Florida

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Funding will help fulfill the increased need for behavioral health services resulting from COVID-19

Tallahassee, Fla. – Today, First Lady Casey DeSantis announced that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has received a $1.9 million emergency grant to address behavioral health disorders resulting from the current public health emergency. The funding, awarded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), will provide crisis intervention services, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and other related recovery supports for children and adults impacted by COVID-19.

"Governor DeSantis and I are extremely grateful for this grant. While our health care workers are on the frontlines, working tirelessly to help Floridians who are physically ill, there is an overwhelming need for behavioral health services," **said First Lady Casey DeSantis.** "This grant enables DCF, through its strong partnerships with managing entities across the state, to continue providing mental health and substance abuse treatment for anyone in need, including those dedicated first responders who are working day-in and day-out to see us through this public health emergency."

Under the Emergency Grants to Address Mental and Substance Use Disorders During COVID-19, Florida was awarded $1,999,828 to be spent over the next 16 months, with $1.8 million allocated for direct service provision. The state will use $600,000 to provide mental health services, via telehealth technology, for healthcare practitioners and other individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance abuse issues brought on by COVID-19. The remaining funds will be distributed among DCF's managing entities, concentrated in areas that have the highest volume of confirmed cases, so they can continue offering critical behavioral health services.

"Under Governor DeSantis' leadership, Florida continues to gain the confidence of federal partners in our innovative approach to deliver behavioral health programs and support families who are struggling during this public health emergency," **said DCF Secretary Chad Poppell.** "By utilizing telehealth, we can ensure that everyone – even those who might need to be in quarantine – can receive the quality mental health and substance abuse treatment they need to be happy and healthy, while also contributing to our collective efforts to flatten the curve."

Today's announcement is part of the First Lady DeSantis' Hope for Healing Florida initiative, which strives to merge private resources with the efforts of the public sector to better serve Floridians struggling with mental health and substance abuse disorders.

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