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PRESS RELEASE

New Resources to Help Massachusetts Residents Cope During COVID-19

Public awareness effort launches today, championed by Senate President Spilka and HHS Secretary Sudders

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

5/14/2020

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

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BOSTON — Senate President Karen Spilka and Massachusetts Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders today announced the launch of an awareness effort to help people cope with social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and May's Mental Health Awareness month.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, nearly 1 in 2 Americans say they are now dealing with anxiety and depression, double the normal rate from a year ago, according to Kantar's National Health & Wellness study.

Massachusetts' new awareness campaign centers around "What If?," a new video promoting the power of reaching out and connecting with those who might be struggling to cope, and includes practical tips and resources on the enhanced **mass.gov/covid19** (/info-details/managing-isolation-and-loneliness-during-covid-19) site.

"May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, and it is particularly important this year to address one of the common, but less talked about, challenges brought on by the pandemic – the feeling of being alone during uncertain times," **said Senate President Karen Spilka.** "One of the most fundamental things *anyone* can do to help those struggling to cope is simple: reach out to your friends or loved ones to see how they are doing. This campaign also seeks to connect those who may need additional resources to the supports we have available as a state. I'm proud to partner with Secretary Sudders and her team on this timely and necessary effort."

"We know that COVID-19 is impacting people's mental health in very different, but very profound ways," **said Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders**. "Social distancing and staying at home, while necessary and effective during this public health crisis, can create challenges for everyone, and especially for those with behavioral health conditions. In partnership with Senate President Spilka, the effort launched today will raise awareness that there are many ways to cope."

The 30 second video, which will be promoted across social and digital media channels over the coming weeks, was produced in coordination with the Massachusetts State Senate, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health using funding provided by the Behavioral Health Outreach, Access and Support Trust Fund created in the Fiscal Year 2020 state budget.

The video asks people to take four simple steps: Ask, Listen, Encourage, and Check-in. It also directs viewers to online resources at **mass.gov/CopingDuringCovid** (/info-details/managing-isolation-and-loneliness-during-covid-19) that offer information and suggestions on how to stay connected to loved ones and creative ways to cope, as well as the importance of using the free and confidential 2-1-1 system to talk to someone.

The "What if?" video is the first part of a larger public information campaign on mental health stigma, sponsored by Senate President Spilka and Secretary Sudders, scheduled to launch later this summer.

More information on how you can get help is available by visiting **Mass.gov/CopingDuringCovid** (/info-details/managing-isolation-and-loneliness-during-covid-19) or calling 2-1-1 to speak to someone anonymously.

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Executive Office of Health and Human Services

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The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is the largest secretariat in state government and is comprised of 12 agencies, in addition to 2 soldiers' homes and the MassHealth program. Our efforts are focused on the health, resilience, and independence of the one in four residents of the Commonwealth we serve. Our public health programs touch every community in the Commonwealth.

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Department of Public Health (/orgs/department-of-public-health)

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Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

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The Department of Mental Health, as the State Mental Health Authority, assures and provides access to services and supports to meet the mental health needs of individuals of all ages; enabling them to live, work and participate in their communities.

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