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OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH LAUNCHES DIGITAL CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE COVID-19 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT HELPLINE

More than 14,000 New Yorkers, Overwhelmed by Pandemic, Have Called Since March 25

Albany, NY - The NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) today announced a series of digital public service announcements to raise awareness of the agency's **Emotional Support Helpline** (**1-844-863-9314**). The Helpline was implemented at the direction of Governor Cuomo to assist New Yorkers who are overwhelmed by the anxiety and loss caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

OMH Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan said, "May is Mental Health Awareness Month, when OMH typically sponsors conferences and other events to raise awareness of the programs and services available to New Yorkers. This May, with the COVID-19 pandemic creating chaos in the lives of so many people, it is especially important to let all New Yorkers know that the Helpline is here to provide assistance, referrals to services, and a person you can talk to if you're feeling overwhelmed."

As of May 18, more than 14,000 New Yorkers had called the Helpline since its launch on March 25. Helpline volunteers have been trained to help people cope with the typical stress reactions brought on by the COVID-19 emergency and can provide tips on managing anxiety, dealing with loss and strengthening coping skills. Helpline volunteers can also provide referrals for mental health services.

The Helpline is accessible to all New Yorkers, including non-English speaking individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is currently operating from 8AM-10PM, 7 days a week.

The Public Service Announcements (PSAs), currently running on social media and digital outlets, reached more than 1.1 million New Yorkers in the first week of promotion. The PSAs are running in both English and Spanish and focus on three different demographics:

- New York State's essential workers, the thousands of resilient employees who reported to work when most residents were told to stay home;
- People practicing social distancing and isolating at home, which, while the most effective tool we have to combat the spread of COVID-19, can take an emotional toll that should not be ignored; and,
- New and expectant mothers, who may be facing unexpected challenges and fears in this time of uncertainty.

The series of PSAs can be found on OMH's Facebook page (https://bit.ly/3dow9eQ) and YouTube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr56qcghZ6EpeOeX3eCk004cGe9RzE1pE).

Radio and broadcast media interested in running the PSAs can download content (https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/ny4pOpTGOy) in English and Spanish.

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