‘Hope Line’ Connects Delawareans to Help for Handling Stress, Behavioral Health Issues

NEW CASTLE (May 15, 2020) – The Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) has launched a phone line dedicated to helping Delawareans cope with stress and address behavioral health needs during the coronavirus pandemic.

The **Delaware Hope Line – 1 (833) 9-HOPEDE or (833) 946-7333** – is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week to connect callers to a variety of resources and information, including support from clinicians and peer specialists plus crisis assistance. The Hope Line, which is free, provides a single point of contact for individuals to tap into DSAMH’s range of services and resources.

Delawareans can also get behavioral health tips and reminders by **texting DEHOPE to 55753**.

The spread of COVID-19 and the social and economic impacts of mitigation efforts imposed to control the virus are expected to result in increased rates of mental health disorders and substance use disorders, along with deaths associated with suicide, overdose, and violence, especially domestic violence.

“Now more than ever, we are called to find ways to offer hope and a helping hand to one another,” said Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long. “The Hope Line will help Delawareans who may be struggling with loneliness from social isolation; anxiety from the uncertainty of these times; or the stress of having to manage with limited resources. This is a time when no one has to struggle alone. We can find ways to be together in our common goal to keep Delawareans healthy and strong.”

“Though these public health mitigation efforts are necessary to help limit the transmission of the virus and the loss of life due to COVID-19, we know such measures will expose people to situations such as isolation and job loss that are linked to poor mental health outcomes,” said Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a practicing family physician. “Anxiety is common, as people fear that they or their loved ones will get sick. Plus, we know that many of us are uncertain about all of the repercussions associated with this pandemic.”

According to a recent poll conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, nearly half of Americans report that the coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health. And Mental Health America reported that since February, the number of people screening positive for moderate to severe anxiety and depression jumped by an additional 18,000 people compared with January. Resources and services are also available through DHSS’ behavioral health support website, HelpIsHereDE.com

“Based on the anticipated surge of mental health and substance use disorders related to the coronavirus crisis, we want to make people aware of the Hope Line so that we can help as many people as possible, when they are ready to receive it,” said Elizabeth Romero, DSAMH director. “We are living in extraordinary times requiring everyone to cope in different ways.”

The Hope Line will increase access to support for Delawareans experiencing mental fatigue, emotional distress, mental health issues, or addiction, Romero said, and to help them from feeling alone or in despair. “Our peer specialists and clinicians are here to provide a safe space for confidential therapy or coaching for those who need it, and they will link callers to appropriate services. We are grateful to partner with many behavioral health providers across the state to help in this crisis.”

A.J. Schall Jr., director of the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), emphasized the critical importance of resources such as the Hope Line. “During times of change and crisis we cannot forget about the need for mental health, not only to navigate existing challenges that people face but also for our statewide disaster and crisis-planning efforts to help those who need it most to adapt safely,” Schall said.

May is national Mental Health Awareness Month. A broad body of research links social isolation and loneliness to poor mental health. This may be particularly pronounced among older adults and households with adolescents, as these groups are already at risk for depression or suicidal thoughts.

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