HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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SANTA FE – New Mexico Human Services Department has launched a statewide mental health support line to help New

Mexicans experiencing anxiety, stress or emotional challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cope with COVID-19 Crisis Counseling program provides free

and confidential short-term mental health services to New Mexicans. Anyone seeking free and confidential counseling to help cope with social isolation and other challenges brought on by the pandemic can call: 505-954-1057. The phone line is open 7-days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The operator will connect you with a crisis counselor within 24-hours.

“It can be helpful to talk to someone when you are facing anxiety, depression and stress, which are common emotions to experience when dealing with all the uncertainties 0f the pandemic,” said Neal A. Bowen, PhD, director of the Behavioral Health Services Division. “Through this program, we are connecting New Mexicans with crisis counselors who can provide support to those who are feeling overwhelmed and stressed.”

A June 2020 survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 40.9 percent of respondents reported “at least one adverse mental or behavioral health condition,” including depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress, and substance abuse, with rates that were 3 to 4 times the rates 1 year earlier. Of the 5,412 U.S. adults surveyed, 10.7 percent reported seriously considering suicide in the last 30 days.

COVID-19 crisis counseling helps those individuals and groups having psychological reactions to large-scale federally declared disasters recover. Disaster crisis counseling is a strength-based, outreach-oriented approach to help those affected by disasters understand they are having a normal reaction to an unusual situation, identify their individual needs and link them to personal and local community resources. Crisis counselors also work to enhance social and emotional connections to others in the community and promote effective coping strategies and resilience. Crisis counselors work closely with community organizations to get to know the available resources and connect survivors to needed services.

The National Center for Health Statistics partnered with the Census Bureau to obtain information on the frequency of anxiety and depression symptoms. New Mexico ranked third highest in the country for those symptoms.

One individual needing help to manage emotions and anxiety was

grateful for the caring and skilled check-ins that helped stabilize his feelings and keep his family safe and well. Another person reported that “no one understood or supported me, everyone failed me, and no one followed through to help me until I made the call.” To date, over 6,000 people have been served. This program ends in the fall of 2021.

The Cope with COVID-19 Crisis Counseling program is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is designed to improve and lessen the emotional and behavioral trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Human Services Department’s Behavioral Health Support Division has contracted with specially FEMA trained Certified Peer Support Workers, and Community Support Workers through contracts with Life Link Training Institute and Presbyterian Medical Services to provide these free and confidential COVID trauma crisis services aimed at the unique emotional COVID-induced trauma facing Native Americans, Spanish-language speakers, school-age youth, parents, teachers, justice-involved individuals, housing insecure and homeless, elderly and those quarantining in care centers.

The state-wide Coping with COVID-19 Crisis Counseling campaign includes highly targeted click to call, digital search, billboards, convenience store window clings and posters, transit, radio, TV, vaccine center magnets, social media, and culturally appropriate direct pueblo outreach.

An animated video is available at: https://youtu.be/m5IC573yyYg.

The Human Services Department provides services and benefits to more than 1 million New Mexicans through several programs including: the Medicaid Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Support Program, and several Behavioral Health Services.

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