For the latest updates and information related to COVID-19, visit the Kansas COVID-19 Response and Recovery website. covid.ks.gov.

Governor Laura Kelly Announces Federal Approval of Crisis Counseling Funding under Kansas's Major Disaster Declaration

Jul 2, 2020

TOPEKA— Governor Laura Kelly has announced that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved a Kansas plan for crisis counseling under the individual assistance category of the Stafford Act.

Funding is provided by FEMA's Crisis Counseling Program Immediate Services Program (ISP). ISP is a program supported by a grant that provides disaster relief assistance offered through specially trained providers and other supports for up to 60 days after a major disaster declaration. Funding was secured through partnership with Kansas Division of Emergency Management, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services and Kansas Department of Agriculture.

"Kansans have faced challenges and uncertainty since the beginning of this unprecedented health crisis," Kelly said. "We are developing a program with both virtual and person-to-person support offered with

social distancing and preventing the spread of COVID-19 in mind. It is imperative to provide options for support during this time to let people know they are not alone, and help is available for those who need it."

The first round of training was held on June 19 and 22 for providers to help support mental health initiatives designed to benefit Kansans affected by the pandemic. The initial Core Content Training is a two-day training developed by The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that covers basic crisis counseling skills and services, data collection and stress management techniques. Over 40 individuals were trained during this session. This opportunity positions Kansas to address the complexities of COVID-19. Collaborating agencies are establishing an approach to provide outreach and services by telephone, virtually and through social media. The program will focus on providing crisis counseling and disaster recovery options, promoting the use or development of healthy coping strategies, connecting survivors with appropriate people and agencies that can assist them, and completing referrals to other disaster recovery programs or mental health providers.

Hotlines through this program with trained crisis counseling staff and online support and resources are available now.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), provides free 24/7, confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals. A chat option is also available online at https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/.

Additional support is available for citizens through the following resources:

The Kansas Ag Stress Resources website offers a variety of resources geared toward those involved in agriculture including a 24/7 hotline at 1-800-447-1985. This is a service through the Kansas Department of Agriculture found at www.KansasAgStress.org.

SAMHSA offers the Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990. The Helpline is a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week and free resource that responds to people who need crisis counseling and support in dealing with the traumatic effects of a natural or human-caused disaster.

With Kansas: Stronger Together as a program motto and brand, this program will also provide toolkits with educational materials and general outreach information for citizens, businesses and providers. Materials are available for the public and encouraged to be used as needed and shared in locations such as grocery stores, churches, businesses, funeral homes, social media, medical clinics or other places where individuals may gather. Some topics addressed include grief and loss, financial stress, coping mechanisms, children and coping, anxiety related to COVID-19, possible suicidal ideation, general resource information, agriculture hardship and other topics. Information can be found online via Facebook at Kansas: Stronger Together.

"As we continue to find ways to proactively battle the ongoing mental health and social effects of this pandemic, I think it's important we recognize the impact puts us in uncharted territory in that it reaches every corner of our state," KDADS Secretary Laura Howard said. "This funding allows us to implement a program that can also reach every corner of our state and is designed to link those in need to crisis counseling and community supports as well as other resources, strategies and comforts as we face this together."

Kansas will be requesting ongoing crisis counseling assistance from FEMA with a request to extend crisis counseling services to Kansans through the Crisis Counseling Program Regular Services Program. The Regular Services Program (RSP) is a CCP grant program that provides disaster relief assistance for ongoing counseling services and support for up to nine months after a major disaster declaration. A website is currently being developed.

For additional resources visit the Kansas: Stronger Together Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/Kansas-Stronger-Together). Kansas residents can also dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-CHILDREN to learn about programs and services.

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