NOTICE **(#)**

Georgia Crisis & Access Line
For access to services and immediate crisis help, call the **Georgia Crisis & Access Line (http://www.mygcal.com/)** (GCAL) at **1-800-715-4225**, available 24/7.

DBHDD receives $1.7 million to support pandemic-related mental health needs

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ATLANTA—The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) has re-launched the Georgia Recovery Project, a perennial grant-funded program that activates upon a presidential disaster declaration and serves to support Georgia's mental health disaster response. The current initiative is designed to help people whose mental health has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project aims to reach 80,000 Georgians during the lifecycle of the grant, which runs through June 15, 2021.

The Georgia Recovery Project is funded by a Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) grant awarded jointly by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The award for the current project is approximately $1.74 million.

"We are grateful for the support of our federal partners," said DBHDD Commissioner Judy Fitzgerald. "This timely grant will help DBHDD provide-much needed support to the thousands of Georgians who are struggling to adjust to co-existence with COVID-19."

Target populations include older adults, especially those in nursing homes; health care workers; schools and universities (staff, teachers, students, and parents); people with behavioral health challenges or intellectual and developmental disabilities; public safety workers; military personnel and veterans; and farmers. However, the Georgia Recovery Project is available to help any Georgian in need.

“Our work is based on the idea of resiliency – helping people identify their strengths as well as coping skills that will enable them to adjust to change,” said Jeannette David, DBHDD’s disaster mental health coordinator. “We help people put their feelings into perspective and understand that these are common reactions to an uncommon situation.”

DBHDD has received CCP grants in the past to support people affected by disasters such as Hurricane Michael, which ravaged Southwest Georgia in 2018. Prior grants have been implemented via door-to-door outreach in affected areas. However, the execution of the current grant differs because the affected area is the entire state and because most of the outreach is being done remotely due to the nature of the pandemic.

The current Georgia Recovery Project is primarily implemented through two vehicles: regional crisis counseling teams and the Georgia COVID-19 Emotional Support Line, as well as via public education and media outreach.

Each of DBHDD’s six regions has a crisis counseling team comprised of two or three crisis counselors and one crisis community liaison. The teams establish relationships within their communities to identify and reach out to individuals needing support. Crisis counselors provide psychoeducation, assessments, non-intensive support with referrals for more intense supports if needed, and links to other community resources to help people cope with their circumstances.

In April, DBHDD opened the Georgia COVID-19 Emotional Support Line, a free and confidential hotline to help people needing emotional support or resource information as a result of the pandemic. The line was initially staffed by volunteers through the department’s Office of Adult Mental Health but is now part of the Georgia Recovery Project and run by professional staff. The Emotional Support

Line is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and can be reached at (866) 399-8938. Georgians are encouraged to use the line any time they are feeling stress or anxiety associated with the pandemic. Callers need not have contracted COVID-19 or know someone who has. The line exists to support people struggling with their emotional reactions to the pandemic.

Individuals who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis should contact the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) for free and confidential help 24/7 at 800.715.4225 or via the MyGCAL app (available in the App Store and Google Play).

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The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) is Georgia's public safety net for mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our vision is easy access to high-quality care that leads to a life of recovery and independence for the people we serve. Judy Fitzgerald has served as commissioner of DBHDD since 2016.

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