NJ Human Services Receives $2.8M for Mental Health Supports and Services Related to COVID-19 Outbreak

May 16, 2020

(TRENTON) – The New Jersey Department of Human Services has received more than $2.8 million in federal funding to support behavioral health services during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA) funding will be used to expand access to counseling and other supports during the pandemic. The funding was awarded to the Department's Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS).

"These funds will help New Jerseyans facing behavioral health issues during this crisis get the emotional support they need," Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson said. "We are here to help. We have launched the NJMentalHealthCares helpline at **1-866-202-HELP** to provide New Jerseyans a safe space to connect and discuss the anxiety we all feel in this challenging time. With this new funding, we will be able to add additional services and supports."

"These resources will enable us to implement critically-needed mental health support and are another example of the strength of New Jersey's partnership with both FEMA and SAMHSA," DMHAS Assistant Commissioner Valerie Mielke said.

With the $2 million in SAMHSA funding, Human Services is funding Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care, which will serve as the coordinating entity to provide treatment, supports and referrals to treatment through expanded access to tele-mental health. These resources are expected to help serve as many as 2,500 individuals statewide. The SAMHSA funding also will allow Human Services to work with the Department of Children and Families to provide peer recovery supports.

The $882,035 grant from FEMA will help fund the NJ Hope and Healing Crisis Counseling Program, which will be run by Human Services with services provided by Catholic Charities, Family Services Bureau of Newark and the Mental Health Association in New Jersey. To date, DMHAS has been providing virtual training and drop-in support sessions to first responders, among several other groups.

The additional FEMA resources will support the training of more counselors, appropriate social distancing outreach, informational materials, and increased linkages to resources.

Department resources for those concerned about their mental health, the mental health of someone they love, or someone who just needs a safe place to talk about their anxieties in this uncertain time include the NJMentalHealthCares helpline **1-866-202-HELP (4357)**, available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week for free, confidential support by live trained specialists.

Also, a videophone mental health helpline is available to deaf and of hearing individuals in partnership with ACCESS at St. Joseph's in Paterson. New Jerseyans can call the videophone helpline at **973-870-0677** for free, confidential support in American Sign Language from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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