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NYS OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH ANNOUNCES "COPING CIRCLES" FIRST PROGRAM IN THE NATION TO PROVIDE FREE TELE-HEALTH SUPPORT AND RESILIENCE GROUPS

Mental Health Professionals and Participants can Register at NY.Gov/CopingCircles

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) today announced the implementation of "Coping Circles (https://ny.gov/copingcircles)" a first-in-the-nation program facilitated by the NYS Office of Mental Health to provide free six-week support and resilience group therapy sessions, held by video or phone and facilitated by licensed mental health professionals.

OMH Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan said, "There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has made life more difficult. Coping Circles will help us ensure that New Yorkers who are struggling at this difficult time can receive the support and assistance they need. I am deeply grateful to all the Mental Health professionals who have answered Governor Cuomo's call to help provide free services to New Yorkers seeking help."

New Yorkers interested in joining Coping Circles, and mental health practitioners interested in becoming facilitators, can register at NY.Gov/CopingCircles. Coping Circles is available to all New Yorkers, ages 18 and older, in a range of languages and at various times during the day. Specialized Circles will be available for healthcare workers and first responders, survivors of COVID-19 infection, those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19, and those who have experienced job loss due to COVID-19. Coping Circles will be available between June 1, 2020 and August 31, 2020.

In-person group therapy sessions are simply not possible in the midst of a pandemic. Coping Circles will provide home-based support and resilience tele-group sessions to help people who are feeling overwhelmed by the pandemic and want to discuss and share their feelings.

During the early days of the pandemic, Governor Cuomo asked medical and mental health professionals to volunteer to serve New Yorkers in need. More than 14,000 mental health professional volunteers responded. This group was surveyed to find volunteers who are properly licensed to provide independent professional mental health services in NYS, familiar with tele-services, and willing to provide services free-of-charge.

To date, more than 750 professionals have met the standards and have indicated interest in taking full responsibility for one or more Circles (6 weeks of 60-minute groups) free of charge, resulting in 1,200 possible Circles.

New Yorkers interested in participating in Coping Circles can access a website hosted by OMH (https://ny.gov/copingcircles) on the secure and HIPAA-compliant Redcap server. Prospective participants will be asked to identify:

- Their preference for a video or phone group,
- Their preferred language;
- Their availability, and
- Whether they qualify for one of the specialized Coping Circles, which will be opened if enough participants indicate interest: Healthcare Worker or First Responder, Job Loss due to COVID-19, Survivor of COVID-19 Infection, Loss of a Loved One to COVID-19

Once six individuals have signed up for a particular Coping Circle, OMH will forward their contact information to a facilitator. Facilitators will participate in a short Coping Circles Orientation webinar designed by experts from the Office of Mental Health and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. The webinar will include an overview of the psychological fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, goals of Coping Circles, principles of support and resilience, psychoeducation, safety, and cultural sensitivity.

Coping Circles Logo
(https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/mediacontact/public/download.cfm?attachment_uuid=39B8887D-BD93-F4FF-82272F40BC9BC58E)

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