

Department of Human Services Reminds Pennsylvanians that No One is Alone, Help is Available

Harrisburg, PA – Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa Miller today reminded Pennsylvanians struggling with anxiety and other challenging emotions due to the COVID-19 emergency that they do not have to face things alone, help is available.

“We know that psychological distress – whether it stems from poverty, systemic racism, or a public health crisis – can cause trauma. And we know that trauma can create long-lasting, adverse effects on a person’s well-being and can extend across their entire life,” said Sec. Miller. “So, I want people to know that if you are experiencing stress, anxiety, or grief from what we’ve been facing – that’s ok. Those feelings are a natural reaction to the difficult circumstances we’re facing right now. But you don’t have to face them alone, and resources are available that can help you work through these feelings.”

In early April, DHS [launched](#) the Support & Referral Helpline, a free resource staffed by skilled and compassionate caseworkers available to counsel Pennsylvanians.

The helpline can be reached toll-free, 24/7 at 1-855-284-2494. For TTY, dial 724-631-5600.

The helpline is made possible through a partnership with the Center for Community Resources (CCR). CCR staff are trained to be accessible, culturally competent, and skilled at assisting people with mental illness, intellectual disabilities, co-occurring disorders, or other special needs, or someone just looking for a supportive, empathetic person to listen. Staff are trained in trauma-informed care to listen, assess needs, triage calls, and provide appropriate referrals to community resources to children, teens, adults and special populations.

The helpline has received a total of 9,213 calls since April 1 and is averaging 68 calls per day.

There are also many other resources that remain available to Pennsylvanians in need of support, including:

- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- The Spanish-language National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-888-628-9454
- The Mental Health Crisis Text Line: Text “PA” to 741-741
- The Attorney General’s Safe2Say program is also still operating 24/7 and can be reached at 1-844-723-2729 or at www.safe2saypa.org.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [warned](#) that communities more likely to experience excessive stress include people with underlying medical conditions or disabilities, people who have lost their jobs, and racial and ethnic minorities. A recent Penn State [study](#) found that across all age groups, individuals who lost work were 64.7 percent more likely to worry about their mental health, a statistically significant increase. And new research, [reported](#) in the Guardian, found that more than half of people who received treatment for COVID-19 were found to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, insomnia, or obsessive-compulsive symptoms.

“We know that crisis does not always allow people to tune in to personal needs. But no matter what challenges you are facing, you do not have to go at this alone. It’s ok to ask for help because

we can and will get through this together,” said Sec. Miller. “We are committed to maintaining a strong, stable, trauma-informed mental health and substance use support system available for everyone across the commonwealth. If you find that you may need help, do not hesitate; reach out.”

More information can be found at dhs.pa.gov.