

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wolf Administration Encourages Pennsylvanians to Support Each Other and Recognizes Mental Health Service Providers

Harrisburg, PA – The Wolf Administration today highlighted May as Mental Health Awareness Month, which seeks to raise awareness and understanding of mental health and wellness, mental illness, and substance use disorders and encourage people who are experiencing these to seek help.

Especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has never been more important for Pennsylvania to invest in initiatives that provide support for vulnerable Pennsylvanians. Governor Tom Wolf's budget proposal calls for \$36.6 million increase in county mental health base funds as well as an additional \$40 million in one-time federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to support efforts to provide critical behavioral health services.

"Each of us can and must be a source of support for our loved ones and people throughout our lives. Think about the number of people you interact with every day – there are endless opportunities to foster connections, be a source of validation, and help people feel less alone in whatever they may be going through," said Department of Human Services Acting Secretary Meg Snead. "Checking in on people, sharing resources, and helping people feel safe sharing their own experience are simple steps, but they can be the gentle support that someone needs to ask for help themselves."

Pennsylvanians struggling with anxiety and other challenging emotions can contact the Persevere PA Support & Referral Helpline toll-free, 24/7 at 1-855-284-2494. For TTY, dial 724-631-5600. The helpline is staffed by skilled and compassionate caseworkers who will be available to counsel struggling Pennsylvanians and refer them to resources in their community that can further help to meet individual needs.

Individuals seeking substance use treatment or recovery resources for themselves or a loved one can call the toll-free PA Get Help Now helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). This helpline is confidential, available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and staffed by trained professionals who will connect callers to resources in their community. Callers can also be connected with funding if they need help paying for treatment. A [live chat option](#) is also available online or via text message at 717-216-0905 for those seeking help who may not be comfortable speaking to a helpline operator.

"It cannot be overstated enough that help is always available. Please don't hesitate to reach out; a pathway to recovery can begin with just one phone call," said Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Jen Smith. "The relationship between mental health and substance use disorders so often intersects, and it is more vital than ever that we bridge the divides between the two and that we take a holistic, coordinated approach when addressing both issues."

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) and the Affordable Care Act require that mental health and substance use disorder treatments be provided by insurers with standards of coverage that are no less restrictive than their coverage for general medical and surgical care. The Pennsylvania Insurance Department (PID) works to ensure that insurers operating within the commonwealth are following state and federal parity laws, allowing those struggling with mental health or substance use disorders continued access to the care they need.

“The Wolf Administration has made it a priority to be vigilant in ensuring that Pennsylvanians are receiving the benefits to which they are legally entitled,” said Pennsylvania Acting Insurance Commissioner Michael Humphreys. “We urge consumers to contact PID’s Bureau of Consumer Services if they think their plan does not meet parity requirements for mental health and substance use disorder coverage or if they have questions about their health insurance benefits.”

For more information or to file a complaint or ask a question, consumers can visit www.insurance.pa.gov or contact the Insurance Department's Bureau of Consumer Services at 1-877-881-6388.

Many other resources also remain available to Pennsylvanians in need of support, including:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Línea Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio: 1-888-628-9454
- Crisis Text Line: Text “PA” to 741-741
- Veteran Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990
- Pennsylvania Sexual Assault Helpline: 1-888-772-7227 or <https://pcar.org/help-in-pa>
- National Domestic Violence Helpline: 1-800-799-7233 or www.PCADV.org

Available online resources include:

- Pennsylvania’s [mental health resource guide](#).
- [Mental Health America](#) for general information and COVID-19-specific resources.
- [Get Help Now](#) for substance use disorder treatment.

Additionally, uncertain economic climate and challenges making ends meet and accessing essential needs can create additional stress and anxiety, and resources are available in your community to help you meet these needs. The United Way of Pennsylvania can help connect you to these resources. Text your zip code to 898-211 to be connected to programs and resources in your community or visit www.uwp.org. People in need of assistance can also visit www.compass.state.pa.us to learn more and apply for assistance programs that can help with health care, food, rental and utility bills, and other needs.

More information on mental health resources can be found www.dhs.pa.gov/mentalhealth.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Brandon Cwalina, DHS – ra-pwdhspressooffice@pa.gov

Thaisa Jones, Insurance – thajones@pa.gov

Stephany Dugan, DDAP – ra-dapressooffice@pa.gov

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