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FEMA Announces Award of New Federal Funding for Connecticut’s Pandemic Crisis Counseling Program

Hartford, CT – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has announced that it has awarded almost \$670,000 to the Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) to address mental health needs related to the pandemic. The grant is connected to Connecticut’s federal disaster declaration and will support immediate service needs through June 29, 2020. The grant will be administered by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). On the national level, administrative oversight of this grant is a joint venture between FEMA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

The funding will be used to launch Connecticut’s Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) grant, a two phase federal grant that is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The funds will target the unique needs of two populations that have been severely impacted by COVID-19, the elderly, and homeless populations. Funds will also be used to support the increased demand for 211 services and to fund an advertising campaign focused on increasing awareness of resources and services available for those impacted by COVID-19.

Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon said “these funds will enable us to target the needs of several populations in need of additional services and supports as a result of COVID-19. We will be able to provide needed counseling and support to the elderly and those that are homeless across the state. The grant also will permit 211 to expand services they have provided during the pandemic”.

The CCP grant was created in the 1970s with the intention of providing crisis counseling services to disaster survivors in a state after a crisis event has occurred. Crisis counseling is designed to offer psychological first aid, emotional support, psychoeducation, stress management techniques and tips, and resource linkage to disaster survivors. Another component of crisis counseling is to develop media and advertising campaigns in order to inform disaster survivors of how to access behavioral health services and other disaster-related resources.

This initiative is a collaborative effort between DMHAS, DEMHS, United Way 211, Advanced Behavioral Health, and the O’Donnell Group. Connecticut will be eligible to apply for a second phase of this grant which would provide funding for an additional nine months if approved. Other partners in the project include McCall Center, Bridges, United Services Inc., Family and Children’s Agency, and the Wheeler Clinic.