FEMA Awards Federal Funding for Mental Health Services to South Carolina during Coronavirus Pandemic

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ATLANTA – Federal funding is now available for the state of South Carolina to provide crisis counseling services to its residents coping with stress and anxiety as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On April 30, the presidential disaster declaration for South Carolina was amended to include the Crisis Counseling program. The program assists individuals and communities in recovering from the psychological effects of disasters through community-based outreach and educational services.

Stress, anxiety, and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions after a disaster. These reactions may include feelings of vulnerability and loss of security, fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones. Guilt or self-blame for not heeding the warnings could lead to:

- Changes in sleep or eating patterns;
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating;
- Worsening of chronic health problems;
- Worsening of mental health conditions;
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Children may have an especially difficult time understanding the impact that COVID-19 has on their family, friends and themselves. Here’s what you can do to help ease their worries and anxiety.

- Be accurate and calm. Children will react to both what you say and how you say it.
- Be available to listen and to talk, let children know they can come to you when they have questions.

- Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online and consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.

Help is also available to all residents of the United States through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Disaster Distress Helpline.

- Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
- Spanish speakers call 1-800-985-5990 and press "2" or text Hablanos to 66746 from all 50 states.
- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, use your preferred relay service to call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or TTY 1-800-846-8517.

This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. For additional information on the Disaster Distress Helpline, please visit Disaster Distress Helpline | SAMHSA - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

You are not alone. Help is available. Learning how to cope with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

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FEMA's mission: Helping people before, during and after disasters.