

Nearly \$80 Million from FEMA To Address Mental Health in Puerto Rico

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The allocations will support the services offered by ASSMCA in various facilities on the island.

San Juan, Puerto Rico – The stressful situations experienced by Puerto Rico's residents have disrupted their emotional health, regardless of their age or social status, according to the Administrator of the Mental Health and Addiction Services Administration (ASSMCA), Carlos Rodríguez Mateo, when describing the recent disasters that have affected the island.

Rodríguez Mateo also recognizes that strengthened mental health is important for the country's recovery from Hurricane Maria, the earthquakes and other collective crises, as it will enable Puerto Ricans to function effectively in all aspects of their lives.

In keeping with a vision that encompasses all aspects of a robust and resilient recovery, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) allocated nearly \$76 million to ASSMCA for several of its facilities around the island for damage from Hurricane Maria; and nearly \$4 million to address its recovery from the earthquakes that affected the southern part of the island in 2020.

For his part, the Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator, José G. Baquero, said, “this is one of the agencies whose demand for services increased considerably after Hurricane María, and it has been proven that they require optimal facilities to be able to serve with attention and care. The agency's funds will repair facilities in various regions; the goal is for ASSMCA's staff to continue to be an instrument of support for all citizens.”.

Part of the funding under Hurricane María encompasses nearly \$31 million for about 20 facilities, with which lead and asbestos problems have already been resolved. The structures include several recovery centers in Moca and Ponce; the Drug Courts in Arecibo, Ponce and San Juan; the Mental Health Center in



Mayagüez; and prevention centers in Bayamón and Ponce.

Among the work pending, there will be replacement of roofs, an elevator and cameras, as well as fire and security alarm systems. About \$15 million in mitigation funds under this allocation are earmarked for voltage surge protectors, commercial steel exterior doors, sealing and roof drains, among other measures to mitigate damage from heavy rains and winds.

One of the facilities that received the most funding is ASSMCA's Bayamon location. Here, from children to adults receive treatment through a range of services such as residential treatment clinics for minors and youth. Services include specialized care for children to develop nurturing bonds with their primary caregivers and families during their early years. Community outreach services are also provided through which psychological first aid is offered to the community in response to emergencies and crises. In addition, support is provided to the homeless population, among other services.

Meanwhile, another \$7.7 million will go to the toxicology laboratory and two ASSMCA residential facilities at the Río Piedras Medical Center, where care and clinical treatment is provided to adults with addiction problems or mental health issues.

In the south and to address damage from the 2020 earthquakes, ASSMCA has nearly \$2.6 million for repairs to the dormitories, cafeteria, recreation area and medical treatment area at the Men's Rehabilitation Center in Ponce. Moreover, another \$944,000 will cover ASSMCA's amphitheater at the municipality.

Regarding ASSMCA's projects under development, the Executive Director of the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, noted that "according to the Quarterly Progress Report from January to March 2023, this government agency has 91 permanent works with obligations nearing \$75.7 million, in the process of design acquisition and another eight projects with designs in progress to repair the damage caused by Hurricane María and the earthquakes. Meanwhile, reconstruction work valued at \$1.4 million is underway at the ASSMCA center in Fajardo. At COR3, we will continue to provide the technical assistance and the necessary resources for ASSMCA to complete this reconstruction work."



FEMA has already allocated over \$30.4 billion for nearly 10,700 projects under Hurricane María; and over \$895 million for about 800 projects that will address damage from the 2020 earthquakes. These funds under the agency's Public Assistance will contribute to rebuilding a more resilient Puerto Rico.

For more information about Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339 y recovery.pr. Follow us on social media at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and Twitter @COR3pr.



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