

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 21, 2020

Connecticut Department of Mental Health
and Addiction Services
Contact: Jim Siemianowski
(860) 305-6810 (cell)

SAMHSA Announces Award of \$2 Million in New Federal Funding for Connecticut's Behavioral Health Response to Coronavirus

Hartford, CT – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced its award of \$2 million in federal funding to the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to address pandemic-related behavioral healthcare needs of specific populations in Connecticut that have been heavily impacted by the pandemic. The grant will support service needs over the next year and a half.

The funding will be used to launch the Connecticut COVID-19 Behavioral Health Response and Assistance (Connecticut COBHRA) initiative to address the global pandemic of COVID-19, which has had a significant impact in Connecticut. This initiative is a collaborative effort that includes the Department of Corrections and the Department of Children and Families. “This grant award will provide needed support for the state’s efforts to address the mental health needs of those most affected by COVID-19” said Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon. “The funding is vital as we face new challenges related to the coronavirus”.

The federal dollars will be used to support a number of activities focused on improving the health outcomes of those individuals affected by COVID-19 including:

- purchasing telehealth equipment for DMHAS providers and Department of Correction (DOC) healthcare practitioners;
- enhancing eight DMHAS-funded mobile crisis teams with additional clinicians;
- providing staffing to a new statewide call center for adult crisis calls at United Way 2-1-1;
- expanding the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Family Based Recovery (FBR) services for youth and their families;

The grant will also increase services for victims of intimate partner violence and will support the behavioral health needs of healthcare practitioners. A final component of the grant would provide support to employee assistance programs at DMHAS-funded agencies.

DCF Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes said “All families face challenges during these uncertain times in our communities. In particular, parents caring for infants and young children need our support and special attention. Family Based Recovery has been innovative in converting their intensive services to telemedicine and adapting to virtual services - ensuring children's safety and allowing them to remain at home whenever possible. We look forward to our continued collaboration with FBR and our partners at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services”.

The DOC would receive additional telehealth equipment through the grant. “We are grateful to SAMHSA and DMHAS for federal Emergency COVID-19 funds that will enable the Department of Correction to expand the use of Telemedicine and Telemental Health services. The purchase of an estimated 30 additional devices will allow our health care providers to maintain behavioral health treatment care to the offender population,” said Commissioner Cook.

The primary focus of the grant is to address the needs of persons with severe mental illness, substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders, youth with severe emotional disturbances and their families, individuals with less severe mental health conditions, and healthcare practitioners.

###