

Delaware Leaders Highlight Mental Health Month, Resources

WILMINGTON – Delaware leaders are putting a spotlight on mental health and wellness as the coronavirus pandemic persists one year later.

Though we have made much progress since March 2020, [research shows that pandemic-related worry and stress](#) are still impacting individuals in their everyday lives. That's why officials are using Mental Health Month in May to encourage Delawareans to prioritize their mental health and reach out for resources.

“For so many of our neighbors across the state, the COVID pandemic has been a traumatic experience. Creating opportunities for hope in challenging times has never been more critical,” said **Josette Manning, Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, also known as the Delaware Children’s Department.** “By prioritizing our mental wellness, we can overcome obstacles and build resilience. Please know that prevention, early intervention, and treatment services, even for children, are only a phone call or click online away. Call Delaware’s 24-hour Child Priority Response Hotline at 1-800-969-HELP (4357) or go online to kids.delaware.gov to find support and resources. You never have to go through difficult times alone.”

In a time where social isolation and lack of social support has clouded families, breaking down barriers to care is crucial. There are support services that individuals can utilize at any time of the day, such as the Delaware Hope Line.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is difficult for all of us physically, mentally and emotionally,” said **Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Molly Magarik**. “During this period of uncertainty, it’s not unusual to feel anxious, stressed out, depressed or lonely. What’s important is that we confide in someone we trust about what we’re feeling. It’s also one of the reasons that DHSS created the 24/7 Delaware Hope Line (1 (833) 9-HOPEDE) staffed by trained counselors who are ready to listen and to offer connections to resources, supports and services as needed.”

While there has been an increase in [reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder](#) during the pandemic, it’s important to know that treatment options exist, whether in person with precautions in place or through telemedicine. In addition, we can all do our part to recognize the signs someone is struggling. For example, [children may show signs of distress](#) through unusual changes in mood or loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed.

“Each year in May we take the opportunity to focus on the critical issue of mental health. We highlight how mental illnesses can impact our lives and our community. The pandemic has really emphasized how important focus on our mental health is and why it is important to ensure there is education about these disorders and how they are treatable conditions. We encourage everyone to help raise awareness during Mental Health Month and beyond and to let people know it is OK to ask for help and support,” said **Dr. Josh Thomas, CEO/Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Delaware**.

Research shows that 1 in 5 people experience a mental illness during their lifetime, and in Delaware, more than [1 in 5 children](#) have mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral problems. As we look to rebuild from the collateral consequences of the COVID pandemic, experts urge to erase the stigma by prioritizing your mental health and having the tough

conversations.

“May is Mental Health Month, and the Mental Health Association in Delaware believes that with the unprecedented increase in the numbers of people experiencing mental health problems during the past year, information and resources around mental health are needed more than ever before. While 1 in 5 people experience a mental illness during their lifetime, the COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the mental health of people of all ages, ethnicities and genders,” said **Jennifer Seo, Deputy Director of the Mental Health Association in Delaware.** “While the statistics and our current situation of being in the midst of this pandemic can seem grim and discouraging, mental illnesses are common and TREATABLE illnesses. One way to check in with yourself is to take a mental health screening at <https://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/mhainde>. From there, seek professional help if you need it. Seeking professional counseling or mental health treatment is not a sign of weakness, but rather strength! And remember, mental health is essential to everyone’s overall health and well-being.”

Please see the below resources and events:

Delaware Building Bridges Conference

Sign up for the Delaware Building Bridges Conference on May 12 and May 13. This free, virtual conference is a collaboration of the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services and the Delaware Afterschool Network. It offers speakers on a variety of topics, such as family engagement and support, fostering social justice and cultural humility, LGBTQAI+ healthcare, prevention practices and more. Register here: <https://www.debuildingbridges21.org/> Spots are limited so make sure you register today!

NAMI Walks Delaware

This virtual event will be held on Saturday, May 22. It is free to register, but fundraising is encouraged. Register at www.namiwalks.org/delaware and follow on Facebook @namidelaware for day of live streams from inspirational speakers and a warm-up stretch.

Mental Health Association in Delaware's Empowering Community Wellness Symposium

The symposium will be held virtually on May 6 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The keynote will be Lisa R. Savage, LCSW, and Lisa will be speaking on "Disrupting Systems that Reinforce Trauma and Racism". There will also be a panel discussion that focuses on the impact of the Coronavirus Health Pandemic on a number of supportive services industries that directly relate to mental health. There is no fee to attend, but please register at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_l80LkJUETwSafNhVCAk-Qg

- **Delaware's 24-hour Child Priority Response Hotline:** 1-800-969-HELP (4357)
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text DE to 741741
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** (800) 273-TALK (8255)
- **Delaware Hope Line:** 1 (833) 9-HOPEDE or (833) 946-7333
- **Mental Health Association in Delaware:** Statewide: (302) 654-6833
- **HelpIsHereDE.com:** Find support groups, resources and treatment services

Media Contact: Jen Rini, jen.rini@delaware.gov