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Christie Administration Announces Hotlines, Resources Available To Help Manage Stress, Stay Healthy

Sunday, November 4, 2012

Tags: [Hurricane Sandy](#)

Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration today announced state and federal hotlines available to help New Jersey residents, health care workers and first responders manage emotional stress and stay healthy.

"New Jersey residents are incredibly resilient. During my visits to affected hospitals, shelters and communities, I met many displaced residents, health care workers and first responders who are demonstrating incredible courage and resourcefulness in helping patients, families, friends and neighbors," said Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd.

"It is important for everyone--the public and EMS and health care workers--to recognize the signs of distress and take advantage of the resources available during these challenging times as we get back to normal," said Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd.

"No one who lives through a disaster is untouched by the experience," said Department of Human Services Commissioner Jennifer Velez. "It's right and real to feel emotional, and important to know that there are state and federal resources available to help individuals experience these feelings in a safe and constructive way."

The New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services - Disaster and Terrorism Branch, is coordinating statewide efforts to help individuals and communities manage the emotional impact of the storm.

Disaster Mental Health Teams are currently providing support in many shelters around the state and are mobilizing to assist in FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers over the coming days, weeks and months as needed. These locations will offer free face-to-face disaster crisis counseling.

In addition, the Disaster and Terrorism Branch provides informational materials about coping, and partners with the Mental Health Association in New Jersey to offer assistance through a toll free Disaster Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-294-HELP (4357). A TTY line is available for persons who are deaf and hearing impaired at 1-877-294-4356.

The federal government also has a Disaster Distress website (<http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/>) and helpline that provides 24/7 crisis counseling and support resources available at 1-800-985-5990 or Text TalkWithUS to 66746. The federal Helpline is staffed by trained counselors from a network of crisis call centers located across the U.S., all of whom provide crisis counseling for those who are in emotional distress.

Signs of distress may include any of the following physical and emotional reactions:

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Stomachaches or headaches
- Anger, feeling edgy or lashing out at others
- Overwhelming sadness
- Worrying a lot of the time; feeling guilty but not sure why
- Feeling like you have to keep busy
- Lack of energy or always feeling tired
- Drinking alcohol, smoking or using tobacco more than usual; using illegal drugs
- Eating too much or too little
- Not connecting with others
- Feeling like you won't ever be happy again
- Rejecting of help.

To help New Jersey residents as they cleanup homes and businesses after Hurricane Sandy, the Department of Health has public health experts available through the state's 2-1-1 system to answer questions about food and water safety and mold removal.

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To reach public health experts, call 2-1-1 or 1-866-234-0964. Public Health officials are available 8 am to 8 pm on weekdays and 10 am to 5 pm on weekends. The 2-1-1 human services hotline is open 24/7.

More than 800 New Jersey residents have called the Department of Health hotline seeking help with food and drinking water safety, mold removal and prevention of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Additional resources about Hurricane help and recovery--including lists of shelters, food pantries and soup kitchens--are available at: <http://www.nj211.org/hurricane.cfm>.

Information about avoiding poison monoxide poisoning is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm>

Additional information about hurricane and flood recovery is available at www.state.nj.us/health/er/natural.shtml and <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/>

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