



CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE

NEW YORK CITY, NY: *Recommendations set forth by the Health Department and NYPD will provide new ways for City agencies to reach the narrow population of New Yorkers with untreated mental illness who may pose a danger to themselves or others:* In late December, the de Blasio administration announced it will strengthen and expand its approach to supporting New Yorkers with untreated serious mental illness who pose a risk for violent behavior. City agencies will work together to refer more New Yorkers to treatment and keep them engaged in the right level of care—ensuring that no person in need falls through the cracks. To address the broken state of our mental health system at the state and federal level, the de Blasio Administration has pledged historic investments in programs and services. Through a new, \$21 million investment, the City will fund \$9.4 million for the Health Department to expand its mobile treatment teams with the goal of connecting more New Yorkers to intensive mental health services and resources. In addition to offering intensive mental health services through the mobile treatment teams, the increased funding will permit the hiring of additional social workers, housing specialists, and legal assistance services to ensure those who are currently undergoing intensive mental health treatment receive comprehensive support. The Administration will also invest \$11 million in Health + Hospitals to create hospital-based outreach teams to coordinate care for people who frequent emergency rooms and other acute care settings. Through this effort, it is estimated that emergency room visits made by this population would decrease by 10%. [More info here](#)

BOSTON, MA: *Mayor Marty Walsh announces \$100 million investment in city's public schools funds will go to student mental health services:* The investment, announced in Walsh's 2020 State of the City address Tuesday night, will be phased in over three years. Funds are expected to go to every public school in the city, and they will be directed to students or school-provided services. The \$100 million investment will focus on student wellness and mental health supports, curriculum enrichment, and programming and activities, and 100 percent of the funding will go directly to students or services provided by schools.

DENVER, CO: *Denver's police partnership with mental health professionals likely to extend through 2020:* Denver's police department for the last three years has worked side-by-side with behavioral health clinicians to co-respond to 911 calls and treat people in mental distress more like patients than prisoners — an initiative likely to stick around, at least through 2020. A \$700,000 contract extension between the city's Department of Public Health and Environment and the Mental Health Center of Denver to keep the co-responder program running through the end of next year advanced through City Council's safety committee and will be brought forth to the full council in early January. The co-responder program, formally called the Crisis Intervention Response Unit (CIRU), has been funded by the Crime Prevention and Control Commission since mid-2016. Over that time, the program has grown from having just four licensed clinicians to 15. Twelve of those are co-responders out in the field covering Denver's six police districts. The CIRU in 2018 responded to 1,725 incidents that had the potential to escalate of those incidents, less than 70 individuals received a citation or arrest. In 2018, more than 550 people — nearly a third of whom met criteria for bipolar diagnosis — were provided services from the Mental Health Center of Denver. Roughly 300 individuals were placed on an emergency mental health hold, a 72-hour period in which a person is involuntarily treated and evaluated if

mental illness is suspected or is deemed an “imminent danger” to themselves or others. An additional 70 people were connected to housing and treatment, and 13 were given detox treatment.

DETROIT, MI: *Univ. of Michigan mental health program expanding to Detroit Public Schools:* Detroit Public Schools Community District has partnered with a University of Michigan program called TRAILS, or Transforming Research into Action to Improve the Lives of Students, to bring mental health resources to all 110 public schools reaching the city’s 50,000 students and 4,000 staff as part of a \$3 million expansion over the next three years. TRAILS began working with Ann Arbor Public Schools in 2013, and has trained more than 400 school mental health professionals in 64 counties, impacting an estimated 3,000 students across Michigan by decreasing their symptoms of depression and anxiety. The program’s track record spoke to officials in the Detroit district, which identified student mental health as a key priority in its Blueprint 2020. It expects the partnership with TRAILS to help improve social and academic outcomes across all grade levels. The program provides training to school staff on two evidence-based mental health approaches — cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness — and then pairs each school with a local mental health provider who has been trained as a TRAILS coach. School staff and their coaches then facilitate 10-session student skills groups, where students will learn effective coping strategies to manage symptoms and maintain wellness. Coaching ensures that staff can sustain their work with student’s long term. TRAILS and their colleagues at the U-M Youth Policy Lab will help the district implement and evaluate mental health programming spanning three levels of service: 1) universal education and stigma reduction, 2) early intervention, and 3) crisis response and risk management. Programming will roll out in roughly 30 schools a year through 2022.

DES MOINES, IA: *DMU Becomes First Medical School to Require Mental Health Course for Students:* All medical schools across the country teach their students how to diagnose mental illnesses. No school, however, has made it a requirement to teach future doctors how to care for patients with mental illnesses. So in 2018, Des Moines University partnered with the National Alliance on Mental Illness to offer a Provider Education Program. This course started off as an elective but students believed it was worth it and now the class is required. This is why one of the key components of the course is to have someone in recovery from a mental illness, a loved one of someone with a mental illness, and a healthcare provider come speak to the class. These individuals sharing their stories with students not only normalizes functioning patients with mental illnesses but also lets students know what went wrong in their experiences and how they can make the medical system better. This Provider Education Program is now a third year requirement for students at DMU with over 200 students enrolled.

MESA, AZ: *Mesa schools use therapy dogs to assist student mental health:* Mesa school district launched the PAWsitive Peers therapy dog program was implemented in five schools. Students at East Valley Academy, Johnson Elementary School, Kino Junior High School, Rhodes Junior High School, and Mountain View High School interact with dogs in counselors’ offices and classroom visits. School employees volunteer to adopt the dogs that are trained using a curriculum called the Mutt-I-grees Curriculum, developed by Yale University and the North Shore Animal League America in 2010. The idea for the PAWsitive Peers program came after a team of Mesa Public Schools administrators visited schools in New York City using therapy dogs. The curriculum centers on social-emotional learning and uses the “natural affinity” between kids and pets to teach empathy, self-confidence, teamwork and ethical decision-making, according to the program’s website. Parents were given prior notice and the opportunity to opt-out, but so far none have. All teachers and pets must be certified by Pet Partners, a national organization dedicated to improving human health and well-being through the human-animal bond, in order to participate. The district has also partnered with the Arizona Humane Society, Arizona Animal Welfare League and Maricopa County Animal Care and Control to identify compatible shelter dogs to add to the program. At Mountain View, more than 40 positive student experiences have been documented, according to district data. The instances include students saying they feel more eager to go to school and feel less depressed or anxious in the presence of the dogs. Schools have also witnessed an overall

increase in attendance. As far as next steps, the district is already working to expand the program to about five to eight schools next semester. The next batch will begin the process at the beginning of the year and incorporate the dogs during the 2020-21 school year.

EL PASO COUNTY, CO: *El Paso County Sheriff's Office mental health unit to double by early 2020:* A second deputy and clinician will join the El Paso County Sheriff's Office's mental health unit this year, doubling the agency's bandwidth to respond to calls involving those struggling with mental health crises. By mid-February, the second team will begin responding alongside the existing two-person team to help quell the unabated mental health emergencies across the county's sprawling 2,100 square miles. A case manager will also join the unit to prioritize follow-up calls, with the intent to connect callers with services they need and drive down future 911 calls. The expansion comes 1½ years after the launch of the Behavioral Health Connect Unit (BHCON), which was designed to divert people into mental health care rather than jail. In its first year, the unit responded to 573 calls and provided services to 450 people, making follow-up checks on 212, recent data from the Sheriff's Office shows. The second unit will help the overburdened first team with the upwards of 200 calls the Sheriff's Office receives each month relating to mental health. On average, the single unit could respond to about only 50 to 60 of those calls. Between July 1 and Sept. 30, deputies made only one arrest, resulting in new charges, when responding to 153 calls relating to mental health. About half of those callers were treated on scene, allowing them to stay in their home as opposed to an emergency room.

FREDERICK COUNTY, MD: *Expanding SEL Initiative:* Almost a year after the first Frederick County classrooms were introduced to social-emotional learning (SEL) through a social-emotional learning program, leaders are looking to expand it. The PATHS program — or Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies — was first piloted in nine classrooms at Monocacy Elementary School during the 2018-2019 school year. Teachers hold PATHS sessions twice a week in the classroom; each session runs about 30 minutes. A report stated that after PATHS implementation, the percentage of fourth-grade students who met or exceeded expectations for English Language Arts increased by more than 28 percent. With math, that number increased by more than 52 percent. The largest impact seen, however, related to behavior. The report shows that in the three months prior to PATHS implementation, 177 behavioral-related referrals were written in the school. After PATHS implementation, the number of referrals written dropped to 27 for the remainder of the school year.

OKALOOSA COUNTY, FL: *Launches a new mental health diversion program:* The deaths of two of the last four Okaloosa County sheriff's deputies killed in the line of duty were at the hands of people suffering from untreated mental illness. The program is only the third in Florida after those in Miami and Orlando. It aims to stabilize people who are going through mental health and/or substance abuse-related crises that may otherwise result in low-level criminal charges. The county's mental health diversion program officially began Jan. 1st.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA: *San Diego's public schools have filed suit against Juul Labs, Inc:* A 40-page complaint filed in San Diego Superior Court on behalf of the San Diego Unified School District on Tuesday alleges that Juul's product "disrupts the learning environment," causing an increase in student absences due to vaping-related illnesses and hurting the schools "by diverting funding away from learning toward educational campaigns, prevention and treatment."

FLORIDA: *Florida students will start receiving mental health classes in 2020:* Florida students grades 6 through 12 will now be required to complete up to five hours of mental health lessons as a part of a new initiative that some schools are rolling out. The topics will range from suicide prevention to substance abuse. The aim is to lessen the stigma that still surrounds mental health issues as well as to educate students and provide learning opportunities for families. The initiative was approved by the State Board of Education in mid-July following the mass shooting that took place at Parkland high school in 2018. Schools participating in

the program will use a combination of videos and computer-based instruction to deliver the lessons as well as classroom discussions. Although teachers will receive training there will also be school counselors available on campuses as well.

PENNSYLVANIA: Gov. Tom Wolf launches "Reach Out PA" mental health initiative: Reach Out PA: Your Mental Health Matters" is an all-agency effort and anti-stigma campaign which intends to expand resources for mental health care in Pennsylvania. Governor Tom Wolf announced the launch last week and promised more commonwealth agencies would be speaking out about mental health support in the coming weeks. The Pennsylvania Insurance Department (PID) will pursue Mental Health Parity regulations to ensure that Pennsylvanians' health insurance coverage provides access to affordable mental health care. PID will also be releasing educational tools to help patients better understand their mental health benefits and access services. The Department of Human Services will be taking steps to incentivize the integration of physical and behavioral health services to remove barriers to coordinating care. This will include financial incentives to encourage care organizations that provide medical assistance benefits to create, maintain, and continually improve collaboration between providers of physical health care and mental health care. The Department of Health will conduct a review of the current network adequacy process, which will ensure that those enrolled in the Medicaid program and buyers of commercial insurance can access mental health care without prohibitive costs. Pennsylvania's departments of Labor, Industry, and State will perform studies about the number and quality of mental health practitioners within the state, including evaluating level of care, salaries and benefits, and barriers of entry into the workforce. In addition, the governor will hold roundtable discussions about ending the stigma surrounding mental illnesses. Planned courses of action include emphasizing the normalcy of mental health difficulties, working with community groups, and spreading success stories to encourage people to seek help. To care for children's mental health, the Department of Education, the Commission on Crime and Delinquency, and the Office of Advocacy and Reform will be working on making social workers, guidance counselors, and nurses more available to school students. Efforts will be expanded to train state workers to provide suicide prevention and interventions, help veterans to learn what services are available to them, and build awareness around dementia.

EXECUTIVE

CDC Data Shows Opioid Prescriptions in ER's Decreasing

- [New CDC data](#) find that the rate of opioid prescriptions for people who went to emergency departments has decreased by 30% between 2006-2017
- Here's what else is in the report:
 - **Prescribing trends:** Opioid prescription rates in EDs increased from 19% between 2006-2007 to nearly 22% by 2011. The rates then decreased to around 15% by 2017, for an overall reduction of around 30%
 - **Opioids prescribed:** The most common opioids prescribed, based on 2016-2017 data, were acetaminophen-hydrocodone and tramadol. Acetaminophen-hydrocodone made up more than half of all prescriptions in 2006, before tapering off at around 41% of prescriptions a decade later
 - **Primary diagnoses:** Dental pain, stones in the kidneys or urinary tract, fractures, and back pain were among the most common diagnoses for which ED visitors were prescribed opioids

FDA Banned Majority of E-Cigarette Products

- Last week, the [Food and Drug Administration](#) banned most flavored e-cigarette products, but with two big exemptions - menthol and tobacco flavors can still be sold, as well as all flavored e-cigarette liquids that come in vials for tank vaping systems will still be allowed
- Together, the two exemptions represent a major retreat from an earlier White House plan to bar all flavors other than tobacco

Deaths Involving Alcohol Increased in 2017

- A new study from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Addiction shows that alcohol played a role in more than 72,000 deaths in 2017, a figure that accounts for roughly 2.6 percent of all deaths in the U.S. that year
- The figure is more than double the 35,914 deaths that involved alcohol recorded in 1999, and it tracks with increases in alcohol-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations over the same period
- The study analyzed death certificate data collected between 1999 and 2017, and flagged all instances where alcohol was listed as an underlying or contributing cause of death
- In 2017, nearly half of those instances were due to liver disease or overdoses on alcohol along or with some combination of other drugs
- The rising alcohol-related death rate was most stark among women, who accounted for an 85 percent jump, versus a 35 percent increase among men

SENATE

The Senate passed the following legislation this week:

- H.R. 263 A bill to rename the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge as the Congressman Lester Wolff Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge
- H.R. 925 An Act to improve protections for wildlife, and for other purposes
- S. 1982 A bill to improve efforts to combat marine debris, and for other purposes
- S. 2629 A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act with respect to the Public Health Service Corps
- S.J.Res. 65 A joint resolution providing for the reappointment of John Fahey as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution
- S.J.Res. 66 A joint resolution providing for the appointment of Denise O'Leary as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution
- S.J.Res. 67 A joint resolution providing for the reappointment of Risa Lavizzo-Mourey as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution

HOUSE

The House passed the following legislation this week:

- H.R 535 To require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to designate per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980

- H. Con. Res. 83, directing the President pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces to engage in hostilities in or against Iran
- H.R 5065 Prison to Proprietorship Act
- H.R 2881 Secure 5G and Beyond Act

116th Congress Behavioral Health Legislative Tracker

- You can access our database of behavioral health legislation [here](#)

IN OTHER NEWS

Starbucks Offering Employees New Mental Health Support

- Starbucks announced a partnership with the mindfulness app Headspace that will offer employees free subscriptions
- Headspace is a downloadable app that offers guided meditation tutorials and encourages taking several minutes a day to meditate and be mindful
- The initiative is part of Starbucks’s Mental Health Matters campaign to open a supportive dialogue surrounding mental health
- Partners supporting Mental Health Matters include high-profile nonprofit organizations, such as the Disability Advocacy Network, Third Place Development Series, the veteran’s organizations Team Red, White, and Blue and Team Rubicon, and the Born This Way Foundation, among others. This coalition is meant to address a variety of concerns, from anxiety and depression to PTSD
- Starbucks also sponsors store managers to receive training from Mental Health First Aid, which is training specifically “designed for Starbucks by the National Council for Behavioral Health that will provide guidance and skills needed to listen to and provide initial resources that can support someone who may be experiencing a mental health issue, substance use problem or crisis.”

Study Shows Those Living With Mental Illnesses Less Likely to Get Cancer Screenings

- A new review of 47 different studies, which covers 4.7 million people in 10 countries, shows that people with mental illness get screened for cancer at much lower rates than the general population, which may contribute to higher rates of cancer deaths among the mentally ill
- Adults with mental health issues were 24% less likely overall to get screened for cancer compared with the general population
- The study found:
 - People with schizophrenia were also, in general, about 38% less likely than the rest of the population to receive screenings for any cancer
 - Men with any mental illness were 22% less likely overall to be screened for prostate cancer
 - Women with any mental illness were 35% less likely to be screened for breast cancer and 11% less likely to be screened for cervical cancer

- The analysis included 501,559 adults with mental illness and 4.2 million in the general population of the Americas, Asia, Australia and Europe

New Study Shows 60% of Rural Americans Say Opioid Addiction Serious Problem in their Communities

- A new study of rural America shows that drug addiction and health financing are major concerns
- The study shows:
 - **Addiction:** Nearly 60% of those surveyed said opioid or other drug addiction was a serious problem, while 1 in 4 said this was the most serious issue facing their community. Nearly half said they personally knew someone with an opioid addiction
 - **Medical bills:** About a third said their family had trouble paying health bills
 - **Health care access:** 26% of adults said they have had recent issues with accessing health care. Almost half said they didn't seek care because they couldn't afford it

Study Links Higher Minimum Wage with Decreased Suicide Rates

- A new study links a \$1 increase in the minimum wage to a 3.5 percent to 6 percent decline in the suicide rate among people who have a high school education or less
- The study, newly published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, followed the economy's upturns and declines from 1990 through 2015 and in all 50 states and D.C
- The research indicates that when unemployment is up, even minimal differences in minimum wage levels can change someone's risk of suicide
- In sobering estimates, the authors calculated that between 2009 and 2015, a \$1 increase to the minimum wage could have prevented nearly 14,000 suicides among people with lower education levels

JAMA Study Shows When Auto Plants Close Opioid Deaths Increase

- A new JAMA study shows the loss of automotive factories across the United States may have contributed to a rise in local opioid overdose deaths in recent years underscoring a connection between economic despair and drug abuse
- The study found that opioid deaths were about 85 percent higher among people of prime working age — 16 to 65 — in counties where automotive assembly plants had closed five years earlier, compared with counties where such factories remained open
- The increase in opioid overdose deaths after plant closings was highest among non-Hispanic white men ages 18 to 34, followed by non-Hispanic white men between 35 and 65
- The findings are most relevant to the industrial Midwest and South, which have been hit particularly hard by the opioid crisis as well as a manufacturing decline
- The findings were based on a review of 112 counties near car plants from 1999 to 2016. Of those counties studied, about 25% had a plant close

WEEKEND READING

Washington Post: Workplace Suicides Have Risen to Record High, With More People Killing Themselves At Work Than Ever Before

Time: As Bushfires Rage, Australia Faces Another Challenge: Protecting National Mental Health

Huffington Post: This Was the Decade That Changed The Way We Think About Mental Health

California Healthline: 5 Things to Know As California Starts Screening Children for Toxic Stress

Town & Country Magazine: Prince William Wants to Start the “Largest Ever Conversation” About Mental Health

Thrive Global: Breaking the Cycle of Mental Health in the Construction Field

****The information in this e-mail was compiled from various news sources including: Politico, Axios, STAT, CQ Roll Call, The Hill, and Vox, ****