



CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE NEWS

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA: *Charlottesville to establish mental health crisis task force:* This week, members of Charlottesville City Council announced they're creating a mental health crisis task force. The task force would be created to help supplement police calls where mental health providers would be more appropriate to respond to deescalate a situation. Councilperson Lloyd Snook says the task force would be to help the police offload situations that other people can do better. Snook says the mental health crisis task force committee would probably consist of 10 members ranging from first responders to mental health professional and mental health advocates and could take some months to create.

CHICAGO, IL: *Mayor Lightfoot Releases First-Ever Comprehensive Violence Reduction Plan to Guide Public Safety Efforts Through 2023:* Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot released the City of Chicago's first-ever comprehensive violence reduction plan that will guide public safety initiatives and programming to sustainably reduce violence over the next three years. Entitled "Our City, Our Safety: A Comprehensive Plan to Reduce Violence in Chicago," the new comprehensive and collaborative plan is the result of more than a year's partnership with State and County partners, community members, philanthropy organizations, faith leaders, and business sectors in an all-hands-on-deck effort to expand the City's violence reduction work through 2023. Since 2016, more than 3,000 people have been killed in Chicago and more than 12,000 have been shot, and yet, the City has never established a comprehensive violence reduction plan in partnership with public and private stakeholders until now. This input was largely collected through a multi-stakeholder Violence Prevention Planning (VPP) process, a year-long convening of government officials, service providers, faith leaders, philanthropic and university partners, individuals with lived experience, and advocates to form the initiatives in this report that are designed to reduce violence in Chicago. Treating violence as a public health crisis that is not only preventable but also treatable through an intentional, coordinated, and sustained effort, these initiatives are led by five guiding pillars, which include: *Empower and Heal People:* Ensuring residents can thrive without fear of violence by increasing capacity and service quality of gun violence, domestic violence, diversion, and victim services programs while also expanding access to jobs and housing for those impacted by violence; *Protect and Secure Places:* Reducing the "safety gap" between safer communities and those most affected by violence through investing in place-based programming and services, and revitalizing neighborhood economies through City-led initiatives like INVEST South/West; *Improve and Advance Policing:* Increasing police legitimacy in communities where trust has eroded by acknowledging past harms by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and implementing new police reforms at every level of the Department, consistent with the consent decree; *Affect Public Policy:* Better collaborating with State and County partners in coordinating policy efforts related to public safety and violence prevention, with a special focus on criminal justice reform, gun regulation, and equitable quality of life; and *Plan and Coordinate:* Further facilitating coordination among not only City departments and sister agencies but also private and community-based efforts to ensure alignment on public safety strategies and efforts in all 77 of Chicago's communities.

HOUSTON, TX: *Mayor Sylvester Turner (D) Launches COVID-19 Mental Health Support Program:* On Tuesday, the city launched a new mental health support program providing resources to people during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program — called "Let's Beat COVID-19: Health Education, and Support Services," or HESS — launched today, and includes a support hotline, virtual support groups, and other resources. The program,

called "Let's Beat COVID-19: Health Education and Support Services," includes a mental health helpline and other resources to help people adjust to the pandemic mentally and emotionally. "There is nothing wrong with seeking mental help," said Mayor Sylvester Turner. "Until COVID is gone, whatever help you need, there's nothing wrong with just getting the help you need to get past this day. Emotional, mental, spiritual, the good news is that there are people available to do it." People experiencing mental or emotional stress can call 713-999-9442 to reach a mental health professional. The hotline is available seven days a week from 1 p.m. To 11 p.m., until at least Dec. 24. In total, the program will cost \$340,326 in federal CARES Act funding. The announcement comes as children return to school amid the COVID-19 pandemic. While the program is for everyone, Mayor Turner said it will particularly focus on families with children who have switched to virtual learning during the pandemic, as well as zip codes with high positivity rates, as well as city staffers. "As city officials, we have a responsibility for being responsive to the mental health needs of our communities," Turner said.

RICHMOND, VA: Mayor Levar Stoney (D) Proposes Funding Mental Health Pilot Program With Partners

RCHD, RBHA: Mayor Stoney announced that he will recommend part of the city's projected surplus balance fund a pilot program dedicated to addressing mental health and substance abuse disorder challenges in underserved communities. The city will work alongside the Richmond City Health District (RCHD) and Richmond Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) in designing and implementing this pilot. "Richmond residents who live with mental and behavioral health challenges are experiencing compounded harms during the pandemic," said Mayor Stoney. "But this program should not be limited to short-term relief. We need a permanent culture shift to destigmatize seeking help." The year-long pilot aims to increase the accessibility of mental and behavioral health support in communities that suffer from disparities in care and outcomes. Director of RCHD Dr. Danny Avula asserts this begins with listening. "Our intention with this program is to listen to the community and use that input to define the scope of long-term services," said Dr. Avula. "Does the community need a psychiatrist who can write prescriptions, or would a licensed clinical social worker who can provide ongoing therapy do the most good?" The mayor announced on September 16 that he will be allocating \$500,000 in surplus Special Purpose funds to address health disparities in Richmond. Part of this allocation will go toward funding the pilot program.

SAVANNAH, GA: Savannah police announce new Behavioral Health Unit for crisis, substance abuse calls: A new Behavioral Health Unit consisting of specially trained officers and medical staff is now responding to police calls involving individuals in crisis or with substance abuse. The Savannah Police Department received the federal opioid grant in June 2019 and began researching similar, successful units. The SPD unit is modeled after the BHU at Portland (OR) Police Department, which has been in operation since 2013. This intercept model will be one of the first police-led BHUs in Georgia. The unit will consist of two non-uniformed SPD officers and a licensed clinician, who will ride in the car with the officers two days a week. The clinician will also be available by phone or tele-medicine if she is not physically present. The unit will respond to calls with factors that include opioid or substance abuse, suicide and mental health disorders, and will assist with calls for homelessness and disorderly conduct. The goal is to decriminalize substance abuse and mental health and reduce the amount of those individuals entering the criminal justice system when other alternatives could address the undying root of the issue. SPD began certifying all officers in Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, and currently has 70 percent of the force with the certification. Four SPD supervisors and 26 officers, including both BHU officers, in addition to officers and supervisors at Savannah-area law enforcement agencies are certified Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT) officers, giving them an advanced level of CIT training. The BHU will respond to calls meeting the criteria and address the immediate response and needs of the call and connect the subject with additional resources in Chatham County. Even after the call is over, the unit will continue to work with the subject and his family to address the issues.

DANE COUNTY, WI: *Dane County announces \$300,000 for mental health crisis center, an alternative to jail:*

Dane County residents experiencing mental health crises could be taken to a stabilization center instead of the county jail or hospital if an initiative planned for 2021 is successful. Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and County Board Chair Analiese Eicher announced the county plans to create a “mental health triage and restoration center.” They committed to providing \$300,000 in the 2021 county budget for the program. The center would provide services for those facing mental health challenges. Individuals would be able to seek walk-in services, be referred by a community partner or be brought in by law enforcement, the county said. Eicher said such centers, also known as crisis centers or stabilization centers in similar models across the country, are an important alternative to jail. “The triage and restoration center is a key part of our criminal justice reform package to keep people out of jail, and to improve the health of the community,” Eicher said. Last fall, the county got back findings from a \$140,000 study that assessed gaps in the mental health care it provides. The report noted a lack of 24/7 crisis service options in Madison. In a related initiative announced in July, the county is also exploring the potential creation of a mental-health first responder program. The county is receiving assistance from a not-for-profit research corporation to identify what would be needed to start a pilot program. The city of Madison is also interested in the pilot.

WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NY: *Westchester County Department of Correction Opens New Housing Unit to*

Support Mental Health Treatment: The Westchester County Department of Correction (WCDOC) opened a newly designed special housing unit to support residents suffering from significant psychiatric impairment, who require intensive evaluation and treatment within a specialized mental health setting. The purpose of the new Acute Mental Health Unit (A.M.H.U.) is to help inmates with mental health concerns and co-occurring disorders begin a path towards recovery using a range of clinical supports and services. Some residents require intensive supports to ensure their safety as well as the safety of the corrections personnel in the facility, and the A.M.H.U. will promote both safety and recovery. In recent years, working closely with their resident health care provider, Wellpath, the Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) and other strategic partners, WCDOC has launched many new initiatives to treat residents suffering from serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders. In 2017, the National Commission on Correctional Health Care recognized their groundbreaking mental health reentry program as its National Mental Health Program of the year. Additionally, in 2019, WCDOC launched a multifaceted detoxification and stabilization program for newly-admitted residents. This Structured Observation and Addiction Recovery (SOAR) unit focuses on two key initiatives: enhanced observation of residents withdrawing from substance use; once stabilized, supporting those individuals with intensive programming.

MICHIGAN: *State Announces \$80M For Opioids Crisis Response:* The state has announced that \$80 million in federal funding will be allocated to Michigan to help the state respond to the ongoing opioid crisis. The funding will support prevention, treatment and harm reduction services, with a focus on evidence-based practices that save lives. The funding includes \$36.4 million from the new State Opioid Response II grant and \$43.1 million from an extension of the current State Opioid Response I grant. "The opioid epidemic has devastated families across Michigan, and we must continue to do everything we can to end it. This funding will help prevent more opioid deaths and help those struggling with addiction recover," Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D) said. Officials said funding from the SOR I and SOR II grants will deepen the state's investment in the most effective tools to reduce overdose deaths, including widespread naloxone distribution and expanding access to medications to treat opioid use disorder. The grants will support start-up costs for new and expanding treatment providers offering medications, as well as providing free training and clinical supports. A new program will seek to increase retention in treatment by offering incentives to patients who attend consistently. A focus of SOR II will be improving medical care following an overdose by making medications to treat opioid use disorder available in emergency departments and creating follow-up programs to conduct wellness checks on overdose survivors. Other steps to reduce harm from the opioid crisis, including

distributing sterile syringes, building trust with individuals actively using substances and conducting extensive naloxone distribution, will continue to expand as well, according to the state.

OHIO: Gov. Mike DeWine (R) planning extra funding for mental health services: Gov. Mike DeWine said Thursday he plans at some point in the near future to propose providing extra funding to pay for mental health services in K-12 schools, universities and local communities. Gov. DeWine said he discussed his plans earlier in the day with state legislative leaders. He said the coronavirus pandemic has created an increased need to help people struggling with mental health issues. DeWine did not share additional details of how much funding might be proposed, exactly where it would go or where it might come from. “We’re working with members of the General Assembly. We’re working on details. We’re hoping by sometime next week we’re able to share at least some of the details. But the mental health concern is something that weighs heavily on my heart and I know it does for the members of the General Assembly,” he said

OREGON: OHA launches behavioral health helpline, outreach campaign to support Oregonians’ mental, emotional health needs: The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) announced the launch of a behavioral health outreach and education effort and new helpline for Oregonians. These new resources will help support increased behavioral health needs in our communities due to the broad impacts of COVID-19 and the once-in-a-lifetime wildfire season. Oregon-based nonprofit Lines for Life and OHA have launched the Safe + Strong Helpline at 800-923-4357 (800-923-HELP). The line offers free, 24-7 emotional support and resource referral to anyone who needs it -- not only those experiencing a mental health crisis. The Safe + Strong Helpline is a response to needs for emotional support around disasters like COVID-19 and wildfires and was funded by the CARES Act. Callers are routed to a counselor who can provide emotional support, mental health triage, drug and alcohol counseling, crisis counseling or just connection. OHA has also expanded its Safe + Strong education and outreach campaign to include behavioral health resources. Safe + Strong is a statewide outreach effort in 12 languages aimed at reaching communities most impacted by health disparities with culturally relevant, linguistically responsive resources. A behavioral health landing page at <https://www.safestrongoregon.org> offers mental and emotional support information and resources as well as guidance for how to have conversations with loved ones who may be struggling. OHA will also launch digital, print, radio and community outreach to ensure as many Oregonians as possible know that help is available for them. Target audiences for the campaign include Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, LGBTQIA+ communities and families with young children, with messaging and materials developed in partnership with community-based organizations.

EXECUTIVE

New CDC Analysis Shows Alcohol-related Deaths are on the Rise

- According to a new CDC analysis, more people — and many more women — are dying from alcohol-related conditions than in past years
- The agency reports the number of people dying from a group of conditions, including those linked to muscle, liver, heart, or brain damage due to alcohol consumption, increased by 43% between 2006 and 2018
- While more men who lived in rural areas died from these conditions than any other group — more than 25 per every 100,000 people — the number of women dying from these conditions has jumped 76% since 2000

- These findings build on [previous research](#) that has shown an upward tick in the number of people who report drinking any amount of alcohol, and those who drink at harmful levels. But notably, these studies don't cover 2020 — and [experts have observed](#) that people are drinking even more during the pandemic

Military Suicides up as Much as 20% in COVID-19 Era

- Military suicides have increased by as much as 20% this year compared to the same period in 2019, and some incidents of violent behavior have spiked as service members struggle under COVID-19, war-zone deployments, national disasters and civil unrest
- The Pentagon refused to provide 2020 data or discuss the issue, but Army officials said discussions in Defense Department briefings indicate there has been up to a 20% jump in overall military suicides this year
- The numbers vary by service, but the active Army's 30% spike — from 88 last year to 114 this year — pushes the total up because it's the largest service. The Army Guard is up about 10%, going from 78 last year to 86 this year. The Navy total is believed to be lower this year
- Preliminary data for the first three months of 2020 show an overall dip in military suicides across the active duty and reserves, compared to the same time last year. Those early numbers, fueled by declines in Navy and Air Force deaths, gave hope to military leaders who have long struggled to cut suicide rates. But in the spring, the numbers ticked up

CONGRESS

House Passes Revised HEROES Act Covid-19 Relief Package with Mental Health Components

- House Democrats released a revised, scaled back HEROES Act package this week – the measure will likely get a vote on the House floor sometime today
- You can view the bill text [here](#), section-by-section summary [here](#), and one page summary [here](#)
- The bill would allocate \$8.5 billion to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to provide increased mental health and substance abuse services and support, including:
 - \$3.5 billion for the Substance Abuse and Prevention Treatment Block Grant;
 - \$4 billion for the Mental Health Services Block Grant;
 - \$600 million for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics;
 - \$50 million for suicide prevention programs;
 - \$100 million for Project AWARE to support school-based mental health for children;
 - \$10 million for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network;
 - \$240 million for emergency grants to States; and
 - Not less than \$150 million of funds provided to SAMHSA must be allocated to tribes, tribal organizations, urban Indian health organizations, or health service providers to tribes across a variety of programs
- In addition, the bill also includes other provisions to support mental health services, including:

- \$208 billion for a State Fiscal Stabilization Fund \$175 billion for elementary and secondary schools to support: costs associated with making up instructional time, including teacher, school leader, and classified school employee personnel costs; providing school-based supports for impacted students, families, and staff, including counseling, mental health services, family engagement efforts, and the coordination of physical health services.
- Research on the mental health impact of COVID-19. Directs the NIH's National Institute of Mental Health to support research on the mental health consequences of COVID-19, including the impact on health care providers.
- Emergency mental health and substance use training and technical assistance center. Establishes a technical assistance center at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that will support public or nonprofit entities and public health professionals seeking to establish or expand access to mental health and substance use services associated with the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Vet Center mental health care and services for National Guard and Reserve members responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Permits any National Guard or Reserve member to receive mental health care at Vet Centers if deployed for more than 14 days in support of the COVID-19 public health emergency

House of Representatives Passes Mental Health Legislation

- The House passed three mental health related bills this week, including one of our [Cities Thrive 2020 Legislative Agenda](#) items *The Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2020*
- Here are the bills and some additional background on each:
 - [H.R. 1109](#) – ***Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2020 (Rep. Grace Napolitano – Energy and Commerce)***: This bill provides specific statutory authority for the Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) State Educational Agency Grant Program that is administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The program supports school-based mental health services, including screening, treatment, and outreach programs
 - [H.R. 5469](#) – ***Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act (Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman – Energy and Commerce)***: This legislation will address the issue of suicide and mental health in youth from all communities by focusing on a few key areas: support in schools, scientific research, and increase funding in existing programs. Though the Taskforce report focuses on Black youth, this legislation will be extremely beneficial to all youth, especially youth of color who do not get the same access to care like their White counterparts. This omnibus legislation will: Provide Grants for Culturally Competent Mental Health Services: \$250 million to schools across the country so they can have more culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services. Priority will be given to schools with higher levels of poverty, to reducing the ratio of counselors to students and to helping more students of color. These grants will also provide training for teachers and other school staff so they can better identify the signs of trauma, mental health disorders, and risk of suicide in all students. \$20 million to establish interprofessional health care teams that can provide behavioral health care. Awards grants to develop cultural competency educational

curricula so students training to be social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists will be able to properly treat youth of color. Increase Authorize Funding Levels for Research and Minority Fellowship Program: Authorizes \$650 million to the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) so that more research into addressing mental and physical health disparities can be conducted. Authorizes an additional \$100 million to the National Institute of Health (NIH) that will be used to build relations with communities and provide research grants for clinical research so that more patient based research can be conducted. Doubles the authorization of the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) to \$25 Million to help more students of color become psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and therapists. Direct Research and Resources at Federal Departments and Agencies: Directs the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a Commission on the Effects of Smartphone and Social Media Usage on Adolescents. Prohibits federal funds from being used for conversion therapy and prohibits SAMHSA grants from going to states that continue to allow such practices

- [H.R. 2519](#) – ***Improving Mental Health Access from the Emergency Department Act of 2020*** (Rep. Raul Ruiz – Energy and Commerce): This bill authorizes the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to award grants to qualifying emergency departments for the purpose of supporting mental-health services. Specifically, grant recipients must use funds to support the provision of follow-up services for individuals who present for care of acute mental-health episodes, such as placement in appropriate facilities

IN OTHER NEWS

Bipartisan Policy Center Report Breaks Down How America Spent Opioid Crisis Funding

- A new Bipartisan Policy Center report shows that roughly three-quarters of the \$7.6 billion in federal aid set aside to combat the opioid crisis went to treatment, recovery and prevention efforts in fiscal 2019. The rest went toward research, interdiction, law enforcement and other criminal justice initiatives
- BPC researchers raised a series of concerns about that overall spending, including difficulties tracking whether the money is effectively meeting the needs of people at the highest risk of overdose
- The report also found that incarcerated individuals in many places still lack access to medication assisted treatment — and that states have had difficulty offering community-based care and wraparound services when those people re-enter society
- The BPC researchers recommended that Congress boost funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s substance abuse prevention and treatment block grant. They also advocated removing federal restrictions on funding for syringes as part of a broader harm reduction strategy, targeting grant funding to address treatment gaps among minority populations, and making permanent the administration’s pandemic-prompted expansion of telehealth services
- You can view the report [here](#)

New Study Examines PTSD Risk Factors Among First Responders to a Major Crisis

- A new study finds first responders to a major crisis may be most likely to experience PTSD if they are older and if they are personally affected by the disaster

- Scientists looked at data from more than 56,000 first responders following a 9.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Japan in 2011 and led to nearly 16,000 deaths
- The responders were surveyed several times over the course of six years. Although only a 7% of the study group likely had PTSD overall, being personally affected by the disaster meant a 96% increase in likelihood of PTSD
- Those who were deployed as first responders for longer than three months were 75% more likely to have PTSD symptoms than those whose time on the job was less than a month
- Those aged 46 or older were more than twice as likely to probably have PTSD than those aged 25 or younger
- You can view the study [here](#)

New RAND Survey Shows Americans Are Drinking A Lot More this Year

- A new survey published in the JAMA Network Open shows that Americans are drinking a lot more this year
- The national survey found the number of women reporting heavy drinking — at least four drinks within a couple hours — increased 41 percent year-over-year
- Overall, alcohol consumption increased 14 percent among all adults over 30 years old, compared to this time last year. But it was 19 percent for adults aged 30 to 59, 17 percent among women and 10 percent among for non-Hispanic White adults
- You can view the survey [here](#)

CLASP Announces October Mental Health Technical Assistance Webinars

- CLASP is hosting two mental health related webinars offering an overview of technical assistance lessons learned as well as highlighting innovative financing opportunities
- The Webinars are listed below:
 - Tuesday, October 13th - *Breaking Mental Health Barriers: Accomplishments and Lessons from the Field* – [RSVP HERE](#)
 - Tuesday, October 20th - *Moving from Systems to Policy Change: Financing Opportunities* – [RSVP HERE](#)

WEEKEND READING

YAHOO: Social and emotional learning are the keys to success at this school

NBC NEWS: America's racial reckoning is putting a spotlight on Black mental health

AXIOS: The long-term pain of the mental health pandemic

SALON: Isolation and opioids during the pandemic

ED SOURCE: Even when the smoke clears, schools find student trauma can linger

FORBES: Pandemic Job Insecurity Taking Toll On American Worker Mental Health

PSYCHOLOGY TODAY: Mental Health Effects of COVID-19 Infection

NPR: Parents Who've Lost Jobs Struggle To Manage Their Own Stress – And Their Kids

****The information in this email originated from various news sources including: Axios, Politico, CQ Roll Call, The Hill, STAT, Modern Healthcare, Kaiser Health News, and Vox****