



CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE NEWS

HONOLULU, HI: [DOH launches new mental health hotline focused in tackling challenges due to the pandemic:](#) The Hawaii Department of Health launched a new crisis counseling assistance program Friday to provide support for children and adults experiencing challenges due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The new program, called “Ku Makani – The Hawaii Resiliency Project,” offers counseling, education, information and resource navigation for people experiencing mental health crises. Trained crisis counselors are located on each major island and includes staff bilingual in Ilokano, Spanish, Hawaiian, Tongan, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Japanese, Palauan and Samoan.

LINN COUNTY, IA: [Mental health center opening in Cedar Rapids:](#) After years of planning, Linn County’s new Mental Health Access Center is only weeks away from accepting patients. The \$3.5 million center, which Director Erin Foster noted went from idea to reality in six years, held a small ribbon cutting ceremony just for staffers on March 5. However, the center will not yet be open to the public. “We want to do an incremental type opening to ramp services up,” said Foster. “We can’t do a ribbon cutting with patients here, so we will take patients a week or so after.”

MILWAUKEE, WI: [City Of Milwaukee To Survey Residents About Pandemic Mental Health:](#) City leaders want to find out how the pandemic is affecting residents' mental health. They expect a new survey will find the isolation and economic challenges over the last year to have taken a significant toll. Over the next few weeks, Alder Chantia Lewis and Milwaukee’s Board of Health will work with Middleton-based research firm Polco to develop a city-wide mental health needs assessment. "We want as many folks in the city as possible, so it’s not relegated to zip code or race. I want a full sampling," Lewis said. Lewis is hoping to have the survey completed by the end of May.

NATIONAL

What the COVID-19 Relief Package Means for Health and Health Care

- **Vaccines:** The bill includes billions of dollars for COVID-19 efforts such as vaccine education and operating clinics and mobile units.
- **Testing:** The package provides some \$50 billion to expand COVID-19 testing through efforts such as implementing a national testing strategy for contact tracing, surveillance and mitigation.



- **Workforce:** The measure allocates approximately \$7.6 billion to help public health departments and partners hire employees such as contract tracers, community health workers, nurses and lab personnel.
- **Postpartum Medicaid coverage:** The package adds in a Medicaid provision that passed the House last year and gives states the option to cover low-income women who just had babies under Medicaid for a year after giving birth.
- **Affordable Care Act and insurance:** The package expands Affordable Care Act marketplace subsidies for two years, providing completely subsidized health insurance premiums for those making up to 150% of the federal poverty level.
 - The measure also includes billions of dollars for behavioral and mental health, including \$3 billion for substance use treatment block grants and mental health block grant programs.
- **Social determinants:** The package also includes various provisions that tie into health and well-being.

[Kaine, colleagues introduce legislation to strengthen mental health response to COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Senator Tim Kaine and some of his colleagues have introduced the COVID-19 Mental Health Research Act, which will study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of Americans. According to a press release from Senator Kaine’s office, the legislation follows recent reports that U.S. cases of depression and anxiety have significantly increased during the pandemic. “From day one of this pandemic, I have been concerned about the impacts on Americans’ mental health, now and in the years to come,” said Sen. Kaine in the press release. “I have been especially concerned about our most vulnerable, and have been deeply troubled by the stories I continue to hear from frontline health care providers struggling with burnout, stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma. This legislation is a crucial first step in helping us understand COVID-19’s impact on providers’ mental health, and helping us identify where additional action may be needed.”

WEEKEND READING

[The Wall Street Journal:](#) COVID-19’s Lasting Effects on Mental Health-For Good and Bad

[The Guardian:](#) These US cities defunded police: 'We're transferring money to the community'

[NPR:](#) 6-Month Experiment Replacing Denver Police with Mental Health Teams Dubbed A Success



[The Enterprisers Project](#): Remote work, one year in: 5 ways to boost mental health

[Today](#): How's your mental health? 1 year into pandemic, experts offer advice

[NBC News](#): Meghan's candor on race and mental health hits home for Black women, experts say

****The information compiled in this email originated from the following news sources:
Hawaii News Now, The Titusville Herald, NBC29, US News****