



## **CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE NEWS**

**AUSTRALIA: Australia launches new COVID-19 mental health clinics:** The Australian government announced that Victoria province now will have access to additional mental health support with 15 new dedicated mental health clinics opening to the public. The clinics, as part of a \$31.9 million federal government mental health package to support Victorians during the COVID-19 pandemic, have been rapidly rolled out across the state at a cost of \$26.9 million. The government recognizes that the ongoing restrictions are having a significant impact on the wellbeing and mental health of individuals and communities in Victoria, and is committed to ensuring that support is available. These new clinics, branded with the HeadtoHelp logo, are a free service and, over the next 12 months, a place will be provided within the community for people to access mental health care as early and as conveniently as possible. The clinics are staffed by multi-disciplinary teams of mental health professionals which may include GPs, mental health nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and/or other allied health workers. The HeadtoHelp clinics will provide on-site mental health support and will also connect to other mental health services in their region, including intensive mental health care or social supports, to ensure people get the help they need when they need it. The clinics will play a key role in supporting GPs, emergency departments, and hospitals by providing easily accessible mental health care. The rapid establishment of the clinics has been overseen by a joint federal and state Mental Health Pandemic Response Taskforce co-chaired by Dr Ruth Vine, the Australian Government Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Mental Health, and Pam Anders, CEO Mental Health Reform Victoria. This collaboration between the Commonwealth and Victorian governments is ensuring that the new clinics will be integrated with local services and will support other enhancements to Victoria's mental health system. The clinics are being delivered by the Commonwealth Government's Primary Health Networks (PHNs) which play a critical role in commissioning mental health services at a regional level. In addition to the clinics, \$5 million in funding is being provided to enhance existing digital and phone services for specific groups that are experiencing significant challenges during the restrictions in Victoria. These services providers include The Butterfly Foundation, Eating Disorders Families Australia (EDFA), Q-Life, Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA), and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Yarning SafeNStrong helpline. This new support builds on the more than \$500 million additional funding provided by our Government for mental health and suicide prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic, including 10 additional Medicare subsidized psychological therapy sessions for people subject to further restrictions. Australia estimates annual federal expenditure on mental health services and suicide prevention to be a record of \$5.7 billion in 2020-21 alone.

**DENVER, CO: Denver Now Routing 911 Calls About Mental Health Issues Away From Cops, Towards Trained Health Professionals:** A lot of city lawmakers are talking about shifting resources away from the "guys with guns" approach that has seen a great many people in need of health intervention "assisted" to death by police officers. The city of Denver is doing something about it. Denver's Support Team Assistance Response (STAR) -- launched four days after George Floyd-related protests began in Denver -- sends out health professionals and paramedics to respond to 911 calls about people behaving erratically. Since its launch June 1, the STAR van has responded to more than 350 calls, replacing police in matters that don't threaten public safety and are often connected to unmet mental or physical needs. The goal is to connect people who pose no danger with services and resources while freeing up police to respond to other calls. The team, which is not armed, has not called police for backup. The STAR team only handles a small percentage of the city's 911 calls. Most are still

handled by law enforcement. But it does free up police resources to handle situations requiring their presence, rather than asking under-trained officers to handle everything residents ask them to handle because they don't know who else to ask.

**ERIE COUNTY, NY: *Erie County Legislature to Look Into 911 Mental Health Calls:*** The chairwoman of the Erie County Legislature is demanding action in response to the shooting of a man by Buffalo police during a mental health crisis. April Baskin has submitted a resolution to overhaul how 9-1-1 dispatchers and law enforcement respond to potential mental health calls in the county. She wants the commissioners of Central Police Services and the Mental Health Department, as well as the sheriff, to attend the next Public Safety Committee meeting to discuss how first responders are dispatched and respond to calls with people who are mentally ill, physically ill, or intoxicated by drugs or alcohol. She says the goal is to resolve these situations without force. On Monday, Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown announced the Buffalo Police Department will be deploying a Behavioral Health Team in October.

**HOWARD COUNTY, MD: *Howard County launches Mental Health Awareness campaign, promoting mental and behavioral health resources:*** County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball announced the "Let's Talk about Mental Health" Campaign.

It will promote mental and behavioral health resources and services available in the county. "We want the health department's bureau of behavioral health to be considered the key source in helping address the mental health needs of our community. Whether that means defining exactly what the term mental health means or helping connect an individual with a more serious concern to a provider."

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CA: *LA County picks judge to lead 'care first, jails last' initiative:*** Los Angeles County officials announced that they have selected a judge to lead a "care first, jails last" initiative and implement a broad set of alternatives to incarceration. Songhai Armstead, identified by the county CEO's office as an innovator and longtime advocate for the underserved, will head the Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative, coordinating among multiple departments and community activists and service providers. Armstead is scheduled to retire from the Superior Court bench to take her new post later this month. Armstead was appointed to the Superior Court by former Gov. Jerry Brown in 2015 and is said to have been instrumental in creating innovative programs that assist justice-involved veterans, homeless people and those with mental health and substance abuse disorders — focusing on getting people the treatment and housing resources they need to improve their lives and break the cycle of incarceration. She has trained the justices of the California Supreme Court and hundreds of others in the justice system on how powerful unseen biases shape actions and contribute to systemic racism.

**CALIFORNIA: *OSHPD Awards \$17.3 Million to Increase Access to Mental Health Professionals in California:*** The Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) awarded \$17.3 million in grants to seven programs to help further build the pipeline of public mental health professionals in California. These grants are being funded through the Workforce Education and Training program as part of the Mental Health Services Act, which is intended to address the shortage of mental health practitioners in the public mental health system. Collectively the grantees will add 36 Psychiatry Residency slots and fund 336 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner slots. The funding will also help launch a new Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship program. In addition to an overall shortage, the public mental health system lacks a workforce that reflects the State's cultural and linguistic diversity. This includes individuals with lived experience to provide consumer- and family-driven services that promote wellness, recovery, and resilience. Today's announcement is intended to help build new and existing training programs in order to help not only mitigate the shortage of providers but ensure that the providers reflect the communities they serve.

**NEW YORK: Governor Cuomo Announces Digital Campaign to Raise Awareness On Suicide Prevention Day In**

**New York:** Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a new digital campaign to raise awareness and to inform all New Yorkers of the suicide prevention resources available across the state. To promote the importance of suicide prevention efforts OMH and SPC-NY are launching the NY Cares campaign. A series of Public Service Announcements and social media graphics will share important facts about suicide, including the importance and success of getting help. The Public Service Announcements will target two main audiences with specific goals: 1) NY Cares Together which reminds New Yorkers that thoughts of suicide are more common than they think but there are steps everyone can take to help people who are struggling; 2) NY Cares about Preventing Suicide, which seeks to normalize help-seeking behavior and points to the fact that up to 90 percent of people who get help for depression get better. The Office of Mental Health will also run a series of informative graphics to help New Yorkers learn more about the impact of suicide, warning signs and how to create a suicide safe environment at home. A streaming digital radio ad will highlight the prevalence of suicidal thoughts. There is also a NY Cares website with resources for yourself, others, suicide attempt survivors and loss survivors.

**NEW YORK: Federal appeals court upholds New York opioid law, allows state to collect \$200M for treatment, prevention:**

A federal appeals court on Monday allowed New York to impose a surcharge on drug manufacturers and distributors for their role in the opioid crisis, allowing the state to collect \$200 million, after a lower court found the 2018 law unconstitutional. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a district court judgment that invalidated the state's ability to collect \$100 million a year after the Legislature updated the law, according to [the ruling](#). The state Opioid Stewardship Act, signed into law by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in 2018, "requires opioid manufacturers and distributors to make an annual payment to fund statewide opioid-related services but prohibits them from passing the costs of those payments through to their customers," wrote the three-judge panel of the Manhattan-based appeals court. The "pass-through" prohibition violated the federal commerce clause, and U.S. District Judge Katherine Polk Failla invalidated the law in its entirety. "The New York State Legislature subsequently amended the OSA so that its provisions expired in December 2018. It then enacted a new payment mandate, effective July 2019, that does not include a pass-through prohibition. In light of this legislative development, the State has elected not to seek reversal of the District Court's invalidation of the pass-through prohibition," wrote Judge Raymond Lohier.

**WEST VIRGINIA: West Virginia launches campaign to end opioid addiction stigma:** Although overdose data for 2020 is still not available, state health officials say the pandemic has added emotional and mental stress to the lethal mix. They've now launched a website and campaign called Back to Life West Virginia, in an effort to remove the stigma from opioid addiction recovery, and as a resource for those who need help. You can view the website [here](#)

## **EXECUTIVE**

### **FCC Final Rule: Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act**

- The FCC issued a final rule on the implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act which designates 988 as a simple, easy-to-remember, 3-digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.
- All covered providers are required to implement 988 in their networks by July 16, 2022
- You can view the federal register announcement [here](#)
- You can view the final rule [here](#)

## Government Health Panel Shows Revamped OxyContin Hasn't Curbed Abuse or Overdoses

- A panel of government health advisers said there's no clear evidence that a harder-to-crush version of the painkiller OxyContin designed to discourage abuse resulted in fewer overdoses or deaths
- The conclusion from the Food and Drug Administration advisory panel comes more than a decade after Purdue Pharma revamped its blockbuster opioid, which has long been blamed for sparking a surge in painkiller abuse beginning in the 1990s.

## SAMHSA Releases 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health Report

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recently released the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). The annual survey is the nation's primary resource for data on mental health and substance use among Americans
- As the NSDUH demonstrates, substance misuse and mental illness continue to be major problems for Americans. These issues demand continued attention and focus across all American communities. The data also reflect impressive progress on the nation's opioid crisis.
- Marijuana use among young adults has spiked significantly in recent years, reaching the highest levels ever recorded. Nearly 1 in 10 respondents between the ages of 19 and 28 reported using marijuana at least 20 times in the last month. That's a more than 50 percent increase since 2012 and four times the level of near-daily consumption reported in 1992.
- The share of young adults vaping marijuana has skyrocketed in recent years, according to the survey data. The number of college students who reported vaping marijuana within the last 30 days jumped from 5.2 percent in 2017 to 14 percent last year. Among non-college youth, that percentage increased from 7.8 percent in 2017 to 17 percent in the most recent survey.
- View the [recorded presentation](#) of the NSDUH data and [webcast slides](#) presented by Dr. Elinore F. McCance-Katz

## The National Institutes of Health Launching P3 to Advance Early Interventions for Schizophrenia

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is launching a new public-private partnership to meet the urgent need for early therapeutic interventions for people at risk of developing schizophrenia
- Part of the [Accelerating Medicines Partnership \(AMP\)](#), AMP Schizophrenia (SCZ) brings together NIH, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and multiple non-profit and private organizations. These partners will work toward the shared mission of discovering promising biological markers that can help identify those at risk of developing schizophrenia as early as possible, track the progression of symptoms and other outcomes and define targets for treatment development
- The [National Institute of Mental Health](#) (NIMH) expects to contribute \$82.5 million over five years, pending availability of funds. NIMH is currently supporting [three research projects](#) as part of the AMP SCZ initiative

# **CONGRESS**

## **Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Bill Cassidy Call for Guidance on Student Mental Health**

- Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Bill Cassidy (R-La.) want HHS and the Education Department to [issue new guidance](#) for how schools and colleges should address the “unique mental health challenges” students are facing due to Covid-19
- In a letter to Azar and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, the two sought information on how schools and colleges should use federal funds to support students’ mental health needs, with a particular focus on minorities or those from tribal nations, students with disabilities, and students experiencing homelessness. called on the Education Department and HHS to help equip schools and colleges with information about how they can use federal funding to address the “unique mental health challenges” their students are facing because of the coronavirus.
- Warren and Cassidy cited recent [CDC data](#) showing that nearly three-quarters of 18- to 24-year-olds reported at least one mental or behavioral health symptom associated with the pandemic. More than a quarter said they had seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days.
- You can view the letter [here](#)

## **The House passed the following bills this week:**

- [H.R. 6133](#) – STEP Improvement Act of 2020 (Rep. Finkenauer – Small Business)
- [H.R. 6079](#) – Microloan Improvement Act of 2020 (Rep. Kim – Small Business)
- [H.R. 6021](#) – Northern Marianas Islands Small Business Development Act (Rep. Sablan – Small Business)
- [H.R. 6078](#) – Microloan Transparency and Accountability Act of 2020, as amended (Rep. Burchett – Small Business)
- [H.R. 4894](#) – Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act of 2020, as amended (Rep. Quigley – Oversight and Reform)
- [S. 2193](#) – CHARGE Act (Sen. Peters – Oversight and Reform)
- [H.R. 1668](#) – IoT Cybersecurity Improvement Act of 2020, as amended (Rep. Kelly (IL) – Oversight and Reform)
- [H.R. 2575](#) – AI in Government Act of 2020, as amended (Rep. McNerney – Oversight and Reform)
- [H.R. 2639](#) – Strength in Diversity Act of 2020 (Rep. Fudge – Education and Labor) (Subject to a Rule)
- [H.R. 2574](#) – Equity and Inclusion Enforcement Act of 2019 (Rep. Scott (VA) – Education and Labor) (Subject to a Rule)
- [H.R. 7909](#) – Ensuring Children and Child Care Workers Are Safe Act of 2020, as amended (Rep. Finkenauer – Education and Labor)
- [S. 2683](#) – Child Care Protection Improvement Act of 2020, as amended (Sen. Burr – Education and Labor)
- [H.R. 3659](#) – Danny’s Law, as amended (Rep. Rose (NY) – Education and Labor)
- [H.R. 8162](#) – 21st Century Community Learning Centers Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020, as amended (Rep. Wild – Education and Labor)
- [S. 881](#) – PROSWIFT Act (Sen. Peters – Science, Space, and Technology)
- [H.R. 4979](#) – Rural STEM Education Act, as amended (Rep. Lucas – Science, Space, and Technology)
- [H.R. 4990](#) – Election Technology Research Act of 2020, as amended (Rep. Sherill – Science, Space, and Technology)

- [H.Res. 908](#) – Condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19 (Rep. Meng – Judiciary)  
[H.R. 2694](#) – Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (Rep. Nadler – Education and Labor)

## **WEEKEND READING**

**CIDRAP:** Loneliness, Isolation Doubled Among Older Adults Early in the Pandemic

**THE WORLD:** Stockholm's mental health ambulance could help the US rethink policing

**BLOOMBERG:** How to Prepare for a Coronavirus Winter

**PSYCHIATRIC TIMES:** Preparing for the Mental Health Repercussions of the Covid-19 Pandemic

**ALJAZEERA:** The Climate Crisis Creating a Mental Health Crisis

**WALL STREET JOURNAL:** Should You Talk About Your Mental Health with Your Boss?

**THE HILL:** How the VA is Using Artificial Intelligence to Improve Veterans Mental Health

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