

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 89 Session of 2023

INTRODUCED BY MARCELL, SCHLOSSBERG, MIHALEK, STRUZZI, HOGAN, CIRESI, FLEMING, FREEMAN, HANBIDGE, HILL-EVANS, HOHENSTEIN, KIM, KINSEY, R. MACKENZIE, MADDEN, NEILSON, PROBST, SANCHEZ, TOMLINSON AND ZIMMERMAN, MARCH 7, 2023

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MARCH 7, 2023

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of June 13, 1967 (P.L.31, No.21), entitled "An
2 act to consolidate, editorially revise, and codify the public
3 welfare laws of the Commonwealth," in general powers and
4 duties of the Department of Public Welfare, providing for
5 COVID-19 mental health public awareness campaign.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. The act of June 13, 1967 (P.L.31, No.21), known
9 as the Human Services Code, is amended by adding a section to
10 read:

11 Section 217. COVID-19 Mental Health Public Awareness
12 Campaign.--(a) The secretary shall establish a public awareness
13 campaign to provide information to the general public concerning
14 the programs and services available for first responders, health
15 care workers, other frontline workers and their families
16 experiencing mental health issues related to the COVID-19
17 pandemic, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety,
18 depression and substance use disorder.

1 (b) The secretary, in establishing the public awareness
2 campaign, shall develop outreach efforts and provide information
3 to the general public on:

4 (1) The link between mental health issues and the COVID-19
5 pandemic, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety,
6 depression and substance use disorder.

7 (2) Resources for first responders, health care workers,
8 other frontline workers and their families experiencing mental
9 health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including post-
10 traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and substance use
11 disorder, including the programs provided by the department and
12 other Federal, State and local social services and mental health
13 agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

14 (3) Any telephone helpline established by the department for
15 first responders and health care workers experiencing mental
16 health issues due to their work during the COVID-19 pandemic,
17 including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression
18 and substance use disorder.

19 (4) Anxiety-reducing strategies and other methods to manage
20 stress, depression and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress
21 disorder during the COVID-19 pandemic.

22 (c) The following shall apply:

23 (1) The public awareness campaign shall target the general
24 public and first responders, health care workers, other
25 frontline workers and their families through a variety of media,
26 including television, radio, print and on the department's
27 publicly accessible Internet website.

28 (2) The secretary shall provide for the development of
29 advertisements by signs, billboards, placards, posters and
30 displays, in English and Spanish, on the public awareness

1 campaign.

2 (3) The secretary shall use money available for the COVID -
3 Mental Health Services Block Grant or other available Federal
4 money for the costs associated with the campaign.

5 (d) As used in this section, the term "COVID-19 pandemic"
6 shall mean the novel coronavirus as identified in the
7 proclamation of disaster emergency issued by the Governor on
8 March 6, 2020, published at 50 Pa.B. 1644 (March 21, 2020), and
9 any renewal of the state of disaster emergency.

10 Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.