

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

FLORIDA LAUNCHES RESILIENCY TOOLS INCLUDING FAMILY SUPPORT LINE AND PARTNERSHIP WITH BETTERHELP



Communities Impacted by Hurricane Ian can access free peer support to overcome challenges

Contact:

Communications Office
NewsMedia@flhealth.gov,
850-245-4111

Tallahassee, Fla.— Today Last week, Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis [announced additional mental health initiatives](#) that are available for Floridians impacted by Hurricane Ian through the [Florida Department of Children and Families](#) (DCF) and [Florida Department of Health](#) (DOH).

Available now, DCF has launched the Family Support Line, which connects individuals and families who were impacted by Hurricane Ian with peers who were impacted and have recovered from Hurricane Michael. Volunteers from the Panhandle will use their personal experiences to provide support, advice and a helping hand to victims of Hurricane Ian. These peers have lived through similar loss and are well acquainted with the road to rebuilding that Southwest Florida is facing. Volunteers will also help direct Hurricane Ian survivors to resources that are available at the state, federal and local level, including information about bridge loans, roof repair, disaster unemployment assistance and disaster SNAP benefits. Individuals who would like to talk with a Family Support Peer can call **888-850-SWFL**.

DOH and DCF have also partnered with BetterHelp to provide three months of free online therapy to those impacted by Hurricane Ian. BetterHelp is the largest online therapy platform that matches licensed, certified therapists with people who seek help and support.

To access these free services, Floridians can visit betterhelp.com/voucher and use code: **HurricaneIan**. BetterHelp will then prompt the user to answer questions that allows them to be matched with a licensed mental health professional.





You Are Not Alone

Anxiety, depression, panic attacks, and high levels of stress are normal reactions to a disaster or traumatic event. While we recover from Hurricane Ian, make sure to use healthy ways to cope with the feelings you may be experiencing.

Breathe

- Count to four as you take a deep, slow breath.
- Breathe out for eight counts.
- Repeat three to seven times or until you feel calm.

Be in the Moment

- Name 3 things you see.
- Name 3 sounds you hear.
- Move 3 parts of your body.

Change your Focus

- Listen to music.
- Talk to someone you trust.
- Engage in a physical activity.

We Are Here For You

Call 2-1-1
Thousands of caring experts are available to help, 24/7. Calls are confidential and can be anonymous.

Call 888-850-SWFL (7935)
Connect to a Family Support Peer who survived Hurricane Michael.

Start to Heal
Individuals impacted from Hurricane Ian can access three months of free therapy sessions through the state of Florida's partnership with Better Help.
[FloridaHealth.gov/BetterHelp](https://www.FloridaHealth.gov/BetterHelp)



Floridians are resilient and these tools will generate conversations to break the stigma of mental health and encourage impacted residents to seek help. Following Hurricane Michael, DOH conducted a survey to assess mental health impacts in the panhandle. This survey found that:

- Nearly 50% reported anxiety
- Nearly 40% reported depression
- Nearly 35% reported trouble sleeping or nightmares

The State of Florida is providing access to mental health counseling throughout Hurricane Ian recovery efforts to mitigate the development of mental health issues among impacted communities, including survivors and first responders. By providing tools and resources that build resiliency, communities are supported to get back on their feet.

DCF and DOH have also developed [materials with information](#) to be distributed in impacted areas on how to deescalate a stressful situation in real time. It includes information on the Family Support Line, and a QR Code for free BetterHelp services. Community partners are encouraged to assist with distribution in their areas.

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal ideation, call 988 to be connected to the National Suicide Hotline. If you are experiencing or see a life-threatening emergency, please call 911.

About the Florida Department of Health

The Florida Department of Health, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.