



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2020

CONTACT: Meghan McGuire

Meaghan.mcguire@dbhds.virginia.gov

**VIRGINIA RECEIVES \$2 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT TO ADDRESS
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF COVID-19**

Services will be delivered through a public private partnership among the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Community Services Boards and the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association

RICHMOND, VA – The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) announced that Virginia has received a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to begin to address the behavioral health impacts of COVID-19. Partners in this effort include Virginia’s 40 locally-run community services boards (CSBs) and the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA) Foundation. The grant will help fund direct treatment services in three areas, including:

- **Increasing CSB Capacity** – Increasing the capacity of CSBs to provide continuity of care and decrease substance use for individuals with serious mental illness and/or substance-use disorders via telehealth treatment and supports;
- **Addressing COVID-19-Related Behavioral Health Issues** – Improving the behavioral health of individuals in the community experiencing moderate mental illness and/or substance-use disorders as a result of COVID-19 via telehealth treatment and supports; and
- **Supporting Healthcare Workers** – Improving wellness and decreasing symptoms of stress and substance use for healthcare workers via specialized virtual supports and partnerships with hospital systems.

“Since March, our Commonwealth, like the rest of the country and world, has had to adjust to a new reality brought on by COVID-19, and this includes significant impacts on our behavioral health and well-being,” said **Secretary of Health and Human Resources Daniel Carey, MD**. “This grant will not only help our behavioral health system better serve Virginians, it will help our health care workers who are on the front-lines of this epidemic deal with the stress and mental strain they are feeling during this challenging time.”

“COVID-19 has had severe impacts on behavioral health and the behavioral healthcare system. We are in a continuous cycle of ‘plan, do, check and adjust’ to keep up with operational, safety and capacity issues,” said **DBHDS Commissioner Alison Land**. “Our system of behavioral healthcare has sustained significant disruptions to treatment availability and access to care. This grant will help us mitigate some of these devastating side effects to behavioral health clients and personnel and help stabilize the system of care.”

Direct services from this grant will be delivered through Virginia’s CSBs and will help reduce the impact of COVID-19 for adults with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders, and youth with serious emotional disturbance. The grant will help fund direct treatment services for behavioral health assessment, medication management and medication assisted treatment, recovery services, recovery housing, and outpatient therapy via telehealth. The grant will enable additional interventions via telehealth for alcohol use

disorder, depression, and trauma-related disorders for people with mild to moderate mental health and substance-use disorders.

“Virginia’s CSBs comprise the safety net for individuals with behavioral health and developmental disability service needs,” said **Jennifer Faison, executive director of the Virginia Association of Community Services Boards**. “As such, they are critical to the lives of over 200,000 individuals per year whether there is a pandemic or not. Continuity of care is paramount and the CSBs stand ready to utilize a portion of this grant money to maintain stability in the system during this time.”

Healthcare workers and frontline responders are particularly vulnerable to behavioral health impacts of COVID-19 such as traumatic exposures and reactions, caregiving and family strain, and burnout. The grant will provide specialized supports for healthcare workers via telehealth through a partnership with the VHHA Foundation, the charitable, non-profit division of VHHA.

“Providing treatment and support services to Virginians in need of behavioral health care is an important part of the work done by Virginia hospitals to address community health needs,” said **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association President and CEO Sean T. Connaughton**. “While that work is often focused on patients, frontline health care providers who don’t always take time to seek behavioral health support for themselves may also need such treatment in some situations. During these unprecedented times when clinicians are being exposed to a range of challenges associated with the COVID-19 response, support through this grant award will be available to assist providers experiencing the complex emotional toll that comes with treating impacted patients amid a pandemic.”

The SAMHSA grant funds are available through August 19, 2021.

###

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) seeks to promote dignity, choice, recovery, and the highest possible level of participation in work, relationships, and all aspects of community life for individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities or substance-use disorders. DBHDS operates 12 state facilities and partners with 40 locally-run community services boards and hundreds of private providers statewide. For more information, please visit www.dbhds.virginia.gov, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#).