

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1420 Session of 2021

INTRODUCED BY THOMAS, FARRY, MIHALEK, SCHLOSSBERG, R. BROWN, DRISCOLL, FREEMAN, HILL-EVANS, LABS, McNEILL, N. NELSON, POLINCHOCK, SAMUELSON, SAPPEY, SCHROEDER, STEPHENS AND TOMLINSON, MAY 14, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MAY 14, 2021

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.--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, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress
18 disorder, anxiety, 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, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress
6 disorder, anxiety, 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, but
10 not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety,
11 depression and substance use disorder, including the programs
12 provided by the department and other Federal, State and local
13 social services and mental health agencies during the COVID-19
14 pandemic;

15 (3) any telephone helpline established by the department for
16 first responders and health care workers experiencing mental
17 health issues due to their work during the COVID-19 pandemic,
18 including, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder,
19 anxiety, depression and substance use disorder; and

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

23 (c) The following shall apply:

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

29 (2) The secretary shall provide for the development of
30 advertisements by signs, billboards, placards, posters and

1 displays, in English and Spanish, on the public awareness
2 campaign.

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

8 Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.