

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8422

To amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to establish programs for the provision of mental health services to individuals affected by a major disaster, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 16, 2024

Ms. BALINT (for herself and Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committee on Homeland Security, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to establish programs for the provision of mental health services to individuals affected by a major disaster, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Mental Health Emer-
5 gency Needs in Disasters Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ASSISTANCE FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**
2 **AFTER MAJOR DISASTER.**

3 Title IV of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
4 Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170 et seq.) is
5 amended by adding at the end the following:

6 **“SEC. 431. MOBILE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS SERVICES.**

7 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The President, acting through
8 the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management
9 Agency, is authorized to provide mental and behavioral
10 health counseling services to victims of a major disaster
11 in order to relieve mental health problems caused or ag-
12 gravated by such major disaster or the aftermath of such
13 disaster.

14 “(b) TYPE OF ASSISTANCE.—The provision of behav-
15 ioral counseling services under this section shall be pro-
16 vided through mobile mental health crisis units and such
17 units shall—

18 “(1) be deployed to counties located in the area
19 affected by a major disaster for not more than 2
20 years after the date on which the President declared
21 such major disaster;

22 “(2) be staffed by individuals who—

23 “(A) are employees of the Federal Emer-
24 gency Management Agency;

25 “(B) are appropriately trained to—

1 “(i) address the effects of major dis-
2 asters on communities and individuals with
3 socioeconomically disadvantaged back-
4 grounds; and

5 “(ii) provide culturally appropriate
6 care;

7 “(C) are professionally trained and appro-
8 priately licensed to provide evidence-based care,
9 such as psychological first aid, crisis counseling,
10 sudden death counseling, and counseling to in-
11 dividuals with post-traumatic stress disorder;
12 and

13 “(D) to the extent practicable, have experi-
14 ence providing mental health services in the
15 area affected by the major disaster; and

16 “(3) disperse information about resources, other
17 preventive materials, and available peer supports.

18 “(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—In carrying out this
19 section, the Administrator may consult with and receive
20 technical assistance or training from the Director of the
21 Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse
22 and Mental Health Services Administration.

23 “(d) TIMING.—The Administrator shall ensure that
24 mobile mental health crisis units described in subsection
25 (b) are deployed immediately following a major disaster.

1 **“SEC. 432. MENTAL HEALTH DISASTER GRANTS.**

2 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The President, acting through
3 the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management
4 Agency, is authorized to provide grants to a State or In-
5 dian tribal government for the purpose of providing behav-
6 ioral health treatment, including screening and diagnosis,
7 crisis counseling, other related crisis helplines, or other
8 service-delivery programs to individuals affected by a
9 major disaster.

10 “(b) ELIGIBILITY.—A State or Indian tribal govern-
11 ment may only receive a grant under this section during
12 the 2-year period beginning on the date on which the
13 President declares the major disaster for which the State
14 or Indian tribal government applies for such grant.

15 “(c) APPLICATION.—Any State or Indian tribal gov-
16 ernment seeking a grant under this section shall submit
17 to the Administrator an application containing materials
18 describing any mental health services available to individ-
19 uals in the jurisdiction of the State or Indian tribal gov-
20 ernment, including an initial needs assessment describing
21 unmet mental health service needs, and critical gaps in
22 mental and substance use disorder prevention, treatment,
23 and recovery support service systems.

24 “(d) PRIORITIZATION.—In providing grants under
25 this section, the Administrator shall prioritize awarding
26 grants to States or Indian tribal governments with juris-

1 diction over areas that have high unmet needs for mental
2 health services.

3 “(e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—In carrying out this
4 section, the Administrator may consult with and receive
5 technical assistance or training from the Director of the
6 Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse
7 and Mental Health Services Administration.

8 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
9 is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
10 \$44,000,000 for each fiscal year.”.

11 **SEC. 3. RESEARCH ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE**
12 **USE DISORDERS AFTER MAJOR DISASTER.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of the Federal
14 Emergency Management Agency shall establish a research
15 program on the effects of major disasters (as such term
16 is defined in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Dis-
17 aster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C.
18 5122)) on incidences and severity of mental health dis-
19 orders, substance use disorders, and alcohol use disorders,
20 including the incidence and severity of such disorders
21 across cultural, racial, and socioeconomic groups.

22 (b) REQUIREMENTS.—The program established
23 under subsection (a) shall include research on—

1 (1) efficacy of assistance provided under the
2 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency
3 Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.);

4 (2) the various long-term behavioral health ef-
5 fects on adults and children caused by specific types
6 of major disasters; and

7 (3) any other subject that the Administrator
8 determines is necessary.

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