



## **COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center MEDIA RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 26, 2020

#### **Contact:**

**Los Angeles County Joint Information Center - COVID-19**

[pio@ceooem.lacounty.gov](mailto:pio@ceooem.lacounty.gov)

## **LA COUNTY EMPHASIZES IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, PROVIDES RESOURCES AND SUPPORT**

**Los Angeles, CA (Thurs., Mar. 26, 2020)** — Taking care of mental health needs and maintaining a sense of connectedness with others is extremely important during the COVID-19 health crisis. The County of Los Angeles continues to provide resources and help to support residents as they follow the [Safer at Home](#) health order.

“With the uncertainties surrounding coronavirus and the challenges of managing such significant changes to our daily lives in such a short period of time, it is normal to feel a loss of control, fear for safety, and heightened anxiety,” said Jonathan E. Sherin, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH). “The County is here to help, and we remain available 24/7 with information, resources, and services to address mental health concerns and enhance wellbeing.”

The public should be aware of and use the following tips and guidance, provided by DMH and the Department of Public Health (DPH):

### **Know the Signs**

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can be demonstrated as:

- Fear and worry about personal health and the health of loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs

There are some people who may experience stress more acutely during this time. For example:

- Older people and individuals with underlying health conditions who are at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19;
- Health care providers, first responders and other individuals who are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response;
- People with mental health conditions and substance use disorders; and
- Children and teenagers.

### **Practice Healthy Habits**

Individuals feeling confined and claustrophobic under the [Safer at Home](#) order should begin and follow healthy routines in order to manage anxiety and stress. The following is a list of helpful tips:

- Connect with loved ones by reaching out virtually: call, text or video chat family and friends;
- Set a limit on media consumption and stay informed by referring to credible sources for updates on the local situation;
- Take care of your body by getting proper sleep, eating well and exercising regularly at home. Try an exercise app;
- Make time to relax. Deep breathing exercises and meditation or yoga can greatly help. Try a mediation app, start a new hobby, or finish projects that have been put off.
- Do not use drugs or alcohol to numb anxieties.
- Stay focused on your personal strengths and maintain your purpose.
- Join and participate in virtual communities based on your interests and hobbies.

### **Get Help**

The County offers a broad range of services to support you and your loved ones.

- If you are feeling overwhelmed, there is support available 24/7. Call the Department of Mental Health at 1-800-854-7771.
- Visit the Department of Mental Health website for [Coronavirus/COVID19 Mental Health Resources](#)
- People struggling with substance abuse can reach out to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-

985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 (TTY 1-800-846-8517).

- The Los Angeles County Sheriff Department's Mental Evaluation Teams (MET) provide compassionate field intervention in situations involving Sheriff's deputy contacts. MET teams (a deputy with a clinician) service all of Los Angeles County. If you need MET assistance for a mental health crisis, call your local Sheriff's station or law enforcement agency, who will contact the MET Triage Desk.
- Another supportive service is the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): 800-799-SAFE (7233) and 800-787-3224 (TDD).