

MEMORANDUM

To: Molly Gray, Lieutenant Governor

Fr: Jahnessa Ryea

Re: Mental Health Advocacy Day

Date: 01/29/2021

Background:

Speaking Order/Attendees:

- 10:30 Molly speaks for 2-3 minutes.

Suggested Speaking Points: A few words about the strain on the community mental health system during Covid would be great. The theme for the day is "Our Mental Health in the Time of Covid (note from organizer)

- First and foremost, I recognize and applaud the work of all of our mental health providers in the state, as well as the Department of Health, the Agency of Human Services, and Vermonters who have the strength to share their stories and advocate for a stronger mental health system.
- At the end of November 2020, there were 105 deaths by suicide in the state of Vermont. (https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSVR_Injury_Weekly_Suicide_Report.pdf)
- Covid-19 has been a time of stress and fear, both of which can contribute further to mental health problems. Many outlets have been established throughout this year to help Vermonter's cope with mental illness. To list just a few:
 - Covid Support VT: is targeted towards education and providing emotional support to those in need
 - Vermont Agency of Human Services developed a guide for Vermonters dealing with Covid-burnout.
 - Vermont Care Partners has opened their virtual door to Vermonters in need of support to be most accessible during times of telemedicine. (All of the above points sourced from <https://www.onecarevt.org/public-resources/>)
- The Department of Health encourages Vermonters to develop increasing numbers of self-care activities while they participate in Self-Isolation or Quarantine. To name a few: yoga, mindfulness, or reading an uplifting book. (https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sites/mhnew/files/documents/COVID19/VT_is_with_%20you_MentallyHealthyQuar.pdf)
- But, we are seeing additional numbers of people entering the mental health assistance system in the air of Covid-19. While some brush off the stress and anxiety as normal with the time, Dick Courcelle, CEO of Rutland Mental Health says this "Leading a mental health agency right now is like moving through thick fog with a dim flashlight." (<https://www.vpr.org/post/were-stretched-mental-health-providers-pandemics-toll#stream/0>) For those who have reliable internet connection and computers, telemedicine has become a resource used in their favor. But, there are still plenty of Vermonters who do not have access to the technology, and thus the longer in-person wait times can be devastating.

- If there is at all a silver-lining of this pandemic, it is that we have the opportunity to rethink how important mental and emotional health are. This is a time where we can reinvent the system to become more inclusive and prevent devastating losses.

Attachments:

- Sources listed above and below
 - o Vermont Dept of Health Suicide Report
https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSVR_Injury_Weekly_Suicide_Report.pdf
 - o One Care Vermont Covid-19/Mental Health Resources
<https://www.onecarevt.org/public-resources/>
 - o Vermont is With You (via Dept. Of Mental Health)
https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sites/mhnew/files/documents/COVID19/VT_is_with_%20you_MentallyHealthyQuar.pdf
 - o VPR: We're Stretched': Mental Health Providers On The Pandemic's Toll
<https://www.vpr.org/post/were-stretched-mental-health-providers-pandemics-toll#stream/0>