



## **News for Immediate Release**

**Oct. 29, 2012**

### **National Helpline to Provide Immediate Crisis Counseling and Support to Residents of Pennsylvania Affected by Hurricane Sandy**

**Harrisburg** –The National Disaster Distress Helpline will provide 24/7 access to crisis counselors and support for Pennsylvanians experiencing emotional distress in relation to Hurricane Sandy.

“The helpline is a national hotline answered by a network of crisis call centers across the U.S., providing phone- and text-based support to people experiencing emotional distress before, during and after disasters,” Secretary of Public Welfare Gary D. Alexander said. “Counselors will be available to Pennsylvanians who are experiencing emotional distress related to Hurricane Sandy.”

Distress symptoms can manifest as anxiety, stress, confusion, isolation and fear. For persons impacted by previous catastrophic events in their lives, new events can trigger troubling memories of prior experiences.

Populations most likely to suffer from distress related to tropical storms and hurricanes include survivors of previous disasters living in the impacted areas—especially children and teens—loved ones of victims, and first responders, rescue and recovery workers.

Anyone experiencing distress in relation to Hurricane Sandy can call the Disaster Distress Helpline toll-free at 1-800-985-5990 or text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746. Spanish-speakers can text 'Hablanos' to 66746. Calls and texts will be answered by trained crisis counselors from call centers throughout the U.S.

The Disaster Distress Helpline, a program of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is the first national multi-lingual helpline dedicated to providing crisis counseling and support to those struggling emotionally before, during or after disasters.

The Disaster Distress Helpline can also connect callers with counselors in more than 100 languages. Interpretation services and counseling services are also available to hearing-impaired individuals through the text service.

Visit the Disaster Distress Helpline online at <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov> for additional resources and to access brochures available for download to the public in both English and Spanish.

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