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3 Dead, 176 Injured, Millions Traumatized: Crisis Hotlines Vital to Disaster Recovery

NEW YORK, NY – April 19, 2013 – The attacks during the Boston Marathon caused physical injuries to many people, but the psychological scars have affected millions. And a record number of people have called and texted the national **Disaster Distress Hotline** (800-985-5990) for emotional help since Monday's terrorist attack.

“The media tends to focus on physical injuries, but the psychological injuries can be just as devastating and long lasting. The **Disaster Distress Helpline** can help to identify and address the emotional wounds created by these acts of violence,” said John Draper, PhD, the President of Link2Health Solutions.

“The Boston Marathon bombing, like all incidents of mass violence, can inflict emotional distress on children and adults across the country,” said Christian Burgess, Director of the national **Disaster Distress Helpline**. “As distressing as this event has been for many, most will manage to heal through the support and care of loved ones and a return to the comfort of routine. However, for some, especially people directly exposed to this malicious act and people who have had prior experiences of violence, skilled help like that available from the **Disaster Distress Helpline** will be needed.”

“After 9/11 we saw both the suffering and the strength of New Yorkers,” said Giselle Stolper, President and CEO of the Mental Health Association of New York City, “today we are soothing the pain and promoting the resiliency of Bostonians.”

The tragedy in Boston is the latest example of how a crisis can shake a community and cause widespread emotional distress. In the wake of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as 9/11, Virginia Tech and Hurricane Katrina, our understanding of the impact of traumatic events on mental health has grown substantially. That is why the federal government, in partnership with Link2Health Solutions, Inc. (L2HS) launched the national **Disaster Distress Helpline** in 2011.

Since it was launched, we have responded to natural disasters like tornadoes, floods and Hurricane Sandy, accidents like the recent plant explosion in the town of West, Texas, incidents of mass violence like the shootings in Aurora and Newtown and now the terrorist attack on the Boston Marathon. After disasters, crisis hotlines have consistently proven to be a vital and effective support for people in crisis, as well as for people looking for longer-term care.

The national **Disaster Distress Helpline** (800-985-5990) is staffed 24/7 with people trained in psychological first aid and disaster crisis counseling. Calls and texts (text “TalkWithUs” to 66746 or “Hablanos” for Spanish-speakers) are answered by a network of crisis centers all across the country.

The crisis center that covers the region of the country that includes Massachusetts for the **Disaster Distress Helpline** is operated by the Mental Health Association of New York City, the LifeNet Crisis Center. Therefore, some of the crisis counselors responding to the emotional needs created by the attack in Boston also responded to callers suffering distress after 9/11.

L2HS can also make crisis counselors who have been receiving calls from people impacted by the attack in Boston and national experts on disaster-related trauma available for interviews. Please contact Jeremy Willinger to schedule an interview.

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***Link2Health Solutions, Inc. (L2HS)**, a subsidiary of the Mental Health Association of New York City, is a leading innovator and developer of technology and communications infrastructure critical for supporting the emotional well-being of individuals and communities in need. Through its service networks and agency partnerships, L2HS administers high-quality programs that reach over a million people every year throughout the country. www.l2hs.org*

***The Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC)** is a not for profit organization that addresses mental health needs in New York City and across the nation. It is a local organization with national impact and has a three-part mission of services, advocacy and education. After the events of 9-11, LifeNet became a central service in the largest federally-funded disaster mental health response in the nation’s history, “Project Liberty.” LifeNet was also called upon by the American Red Cross to assist in their Mental Health Recovery Program post-9/11 and again in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast. For over 40 years, MHA-NYC has offered innovative and culturally sensitive services that promote the importance of mental wellness. www.mha-nyc.org*

