



Media Contact:
Stacia Weaver
Sweaver@mhaofnyc.org
(718) 974 - 7213

**The Mental Health Association of New York City
and NYS OASAS Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez Launch iHelp:
Sandy Stress Relief in Nassau County**

*Mental Health Program for Superstorm Sandy Survivors Who Are Still Struggling
With Emotional Distress Two Years Later*

New York: October 15, 2014: Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse today launched a new innovative online program to assist those still suffering from emotional distress from Superstorm Sandy called **iHelp: Sandy Stress Relief** at the Long Beach Library in Long Beach, N.Y. Commissioner González-Sánchez was joined by Nassau County Legislator Denise Ford; Nassau County Executive Office representative and SANDY Storm Recovery Liaison Michael Raab; Giselle Stolper, President and CEO of the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC); and Seth Feuerstein, M.D, CEO of Cobalt Therapeutics, the company MHA-NYC is partnering with to administer iHelp: Sandy Stress Relief online services. iHelp: Sandy Stress Relief delivers care to New York State residents, including Long Islanders.

“Many New Yorkers are still stressed and are suffering from the emotional after effects of Superstorm Sandy now two years after the storm hit our shores,” said Commissioner González-Sánchez. “With the launch of this new service, iHelp: Sandy Stress Relief, Long Islanders and other New Yorkers who are facing alcohol and substance abuse issues and those who are suffering from depression, anxiety or other mental health problems, can get the support they need right at the click of a computer mouse or by making a phone call.”

According to Ms. Stolper, “Between 20 to 40 percent of individuals directly exposed to a disaster will continue to experience psychological distress more than a year after the event.” Common, persistent symptoms include problems with sleep, mood, worry, anxiety, and increased use of alcohol and other substances. Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT for short, is a first-line evidence-based treatment for the most common behavioral health disorders that arise after a natural disaster. In partnership with Cobalt Therapeutics, MHA-NYC provides CBT programs to survivors that include **Fear Fighter** for anxiety, phobias and panic; **RESTORE** for insomnia; **SHADE** for alcohol, substance abuse and depression; **OCFighter** for obsessive compulsive disorder; and **Moodcalmer** for depression. Most programs are offered in English and Spanish. iHelp online programs were created by leading experts who have studied the programs in clinical trials to prove they are effective and have published their results in leading medical journals.

Individuals who use iHelp: Sandy Stress Relief’s online programs will have the benefit of telephone, text, and chat supports from MHA-NYC’s trained counselors who are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Cobalt Therapeutics CEO Seth Feuerstein said, “The availability of CBT online is a game changer for people in Nassau County who would not otherwise have access to care. They will now be able to access care when, how and where they want to.”

iHelp: Sandy Stress Relief is funded by the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. To learn more about iHelp or to enroll in one of the programs, visit www.iHelpcbt.com or call 1-866-793-2765 and a trained counselor will help the caller choose the best program for their needs.

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About the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services:

The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (NYS OASAS) oversees one of the nation's largest addiction services systems with more than 1,600 prevention, treatment and recovery programs. NYS OASAS treatment programs serve approximately 100,000 people on any given day and nearly 240,000 individuals on an annual basis. Individuals battling alcohol or drug addiction can get help by calling the toll-free, 24-hour 7 days a week HOPEline at [1-877-8-HOPENY](tel:1-877-8-HOPENY). For more information, please visit www.oasas.ny.gov. Follow OASAS: www.twitter.com/nysoasas / [facebook profile: NYS OASAS](https://facebook.com/nysoasas) / www.youtube.com/nysoasas / www.flickr.com/photos/nysoasas

About the Mental Health Association of New York City:

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. MHA-NYC identifies unmet needs and develops innovative, culturally sensitive programs to improve the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness while promoting the importance of mental health. MHA-NYC's Here to Help Call Center (H2H Connect) is a national leader in behavioral health call center services. For more information about MHA-NYC, visit www.mhaofnyc.org.