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Non-profit Disaster Psychiatry Outreach Joins Vibrant Emotional Health to Create Comprehensive Emotional Support Services in the Aftermath of Disasters

Will Host Symposium Focused on Integrating Mental Health in Disaster Recovery in Puerto Rico, August 9-10, 2018

New York, August 1, 2018– Disaster Psychiatry Outreach (DPO) announced today it has agreed to transfer its disaster programming and activities to Vibrant Emotional Health (Vibrant), the organization which administers the SAMHSA-funded Disaster Distress Helpline. The addition of DPO’s expertise will enhance Vibrant’s suite of exemplary programs that provide crisis mental health support to communities and individuals involved in natural and manmade disasters.

“DPO’s mission is to alleviate suffering in the aftermath of disasters through the expertise and good will of psychiatrists,” said Sander Koyfman, M.D., president of DPO. “By combining our efforts with Vibrant’s other disaster programs, communities and individuals in distress will receive essential emotional support more quickly and effectively. Connecting Vibrant’s leadership in disaster recovery and its technology with our volunteer psychiatrists, brings us closer to our ultimate goal of a vertically integrated mental health care system in disaster recovery.”

DPO sends teams of volunteer psychiatrists to provide immediate mental health services in the aftermath of disasters, in conjunction with government and private charitable organizations. DPO also provides educational and training programs on disaster mental health recovery for professionals in the fields of healthcare, public

health and emergency management as well as offering research and policy recommendations in the field of disaster mental health.

To further solidify this relationship, Dr. Koyfman and Dr. Grant Brenner, Vice President of DPO, have joined Vibrant's Board of Directors.

Vibrant administers the National Disaster Distress Helpline, which provides crisis counseling and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters. DDH is available to anyone in the United States and its territories and is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

"With DPO and DDH working together, we will be able to extend our reach to people, communities and first responders when, where and how they need support," said Kim Williams, President & CEO of Vibrant Emotional Health.

DPO and Vibrant have partnered with Academia de Directores Medicos de Puerto Rico, Inc. (Puerto Rico Academy of Medical Directors, Inc.) to convene the preeminent conference on integration of mental healthcare into the general healthcare system in Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane Maria. "Disaster Preparedness and Response: Increasing Capacity through Shared Knowledge, A Case for Care Integration" will be held August 9 and 10, 2018 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Approximately 200 healthcare providers, first responders, insurers, and policy makers will address disaster preparedness and response, best practices and innovations, make a case for integrated care and, perhaps most importantly, offer concrete tools and approaches to managing during a disaster and how to move beyond the crisis.

"Hurricane Maria created widespread devastation across Puerto Rico. Its healthcare infrastructure suffered a significant blow at the exact time of the increased need, providers had no choice but to persevere," said Koyfman. "This symposium provides an opportunity for Puerto Rican and stateside primary care providers, behavioral health clinicians and policymakers to come together, take stock of lessons learned and share their experience and expertise as they explore the theme of 'Rebuilding Better.'"

For additional information regarding the conference speakers and agenda visit [here](#).

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EDITOR’S NOTE: Accessing Help from Disaster Distress Helpline

From the United States and its territories, call **1-800-985-5990** to connect with a trained crisis counselor, 24/7. **Spanish-speakers can call the hotline and press “2”** for 24/7 bilingual support.

Callers to the hotline can also connect with counselors in over 100 other languages via 3rd-party interpretation services; to connect with a counselor in your primary language, simply indicate your preferred language to the responding counselor and she/he will connect to a live interpreter (interpretation in less commonly-spoken languages may require calling back at an appointed time).

To connect with a live DDH crisis counselor 24/7 via Text, **from the 50 states text “TalkWithUs” for English or “Hablanos” for Spanish to 66746. Spanish-speakers from Puerto Rico can text “Hablanos” to 1-787-339-2663.**

The Disaster Distress Helpline’s **TTY number 1-800-846-8517** is available 24/7 to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, who can also utilize the texting options or their preferred Relay service (including 7-1-1) to connect with the main DDH hotline 1-800-985-5990, 24/7.

About Vibrant Emotional Health

Formerly the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC), Vibrant Emotional Health is a non-profit organization that helps people achieve emotional wellbeing. For over 50 years, our groundbreaking solutions have delivered high-quality services and support, when, where and how people need it. We offer confidential emotional support through our state-of-the-art contact center and crisis hotline services that use leading edge telephone, text and web-based technologies and include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, NFL Life Line and NYC Well. Through our community wellness programs individuals and families obtain supports and skills they need to thrive. Our advocacy and education initiatives promote mental wellbeing as a social responsibility. Each year we help more than 2.5 million people live healthier and more vibrant lives. We’re advancing access, dignity and respect for all and revolutionizing the system for good. Visit www.vibrant.org for more. And follow Vibrant on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

