

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 258 Session of 2023

INTRODUCED BY FARRY, DILLON, TARTAGLIONE, KANE, COSTA AND VOGEL,  
JANUARY 31, 2023

REFERRED TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, JANUARY 31, 2023

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of June 13, 1967 (P.L.31, No.21), entitled "An  
2 act to consolidate, editorially revise, and codify the public  
3 welfare laws of the Commonwealth," in general powers and  
4 duties of the Department of Public Welfare, providing for  
5 COVID-19 mental health public awareness campaign.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. The act of June 13, 1967 (P.L.31, No.21), known  
9 as the Human Services Code, is amended by adding a section to  
10 read:

11 Section 217. COVID-19 Mental Health Public Awareness  
12 Campaign.--(a) The secretary shall establish a public awareness  
13 campaign to provide information to the general public concerning  
14 the programs and services available for first responders, health  
15 care workers, other frontline workers and their families  
16 experiencing mental health issues related to the COVID-19  
17 pandemic, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety,  
18 depression and substance use disorder.

19 (b) The secretary, in establishing the public awareness

1 campaign, shall develop outreach efforts and provide information  
2 to the general public on:

3 (1) the link between mental health issues and the COVID-19  
4 pandemic, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety,  
5 depression and substance use disorder;

6 (2) resources for first responders, health care workers,  
7 other frontline workers and their families experiencing mental  
8 health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including post-  
9 traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, substance use  
10 disorder and the programs provided by the department and other  
11 Federal, State and local social services and mental health  
12 agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic;

13 (3) any telephone helpline established by the department for  
14 first responders and health care workers experiencing mental  
15 health issues due to their work during the COVID-19 pandemic;  
16 and

17 (4) anxiety-reducing strategies and other methods to manage  
18 stress, depression and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress  
19 disorder.

20 (c) The following shall apply:

21 (1) The public awareness campaign shall target the general  
22 public and first responders, health care workers, other  
23 frontline workers and their families through a variety of media,  
24 including television, radio, print and on the department's  
25 publicly accessible Internet website.

26 (2) The secretary shall provide for the development of  
27 advertisements by signs, billboards, placards, posters and  
28 displays, in English and Spanish, on the public awareness  
29 campaign.

30 (d) As used in this section, the term "COVID-19 pandemic"

1 shall mean the novel coronavirus as identified in the  
2 proclamation of disaster emergency issued by the Governor on  
3 March 6, 2020, published at 50 Pa.B. 1644 (March 21, 2020), and  
4 any renewal of the state of disaster emergency.

5 Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.