

HHSC launches statewide mental health support line

Texas Health and Human Services has launched a 24/7 statewide mental health support line to help Texans experiencing anxiety, stress or emotional challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This new resource offers COVID-19-related mental

health support for all Texans. People can call the Statewide COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week toll-free at 833-986-1919.

“Through this new effort, we are connecting Texans with mental health professionals

who can help provide support to those who are feeling overwhelmed and stressed,” said Sonja Gaines, Deputy Executive Commissioner for Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Behavioral Health Services. “It can be helpful to talk to someone when you are facing anxiety, depression and stress, which are not uncommon to experience in the face of a rapidly changing situation like a pandemic.”

Operated by the Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD, the support line offers trauma-informed support and psychological first aid to those experiencing stress and anxiety related to COVID-19. Counseling services are confidential and free of charge to people who call the hotline.

“It is important to recognize how our mental health can be affected by the pandemic,” said Sen. Jane Nelson. “The mental health support line for

COVID-19 will go a long way to ensure Texans who are struggling with anxiety, depression or other mental health issues can access the care they need.”

For general health-related information and precautions on COVID-19, people can visit the DSHS webpage and the CDC webpage. To stay up-to-date on the latest news impacting HHS services and regulated providers, people can visit the HHS COVID-19 webpage.

‘Under the Texas Sky’ podcast to launch April 1

We’re not fooling around when we tell you April 1 marks the beginning of the second season of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s podcast, Under the Texas Sky. The podcast brings the great outdoors to listeners through the experiences of everyday people, as well as experts inside and outside of the agency.

Episodes this season feature a tutorial on turkey calling for the spring, women in conservation (including a game warden and U.S. park ranger), an update on horned lizard restoration efforts, tips on fueling bodies for outdoor adventure, choosing the right outdoor footwear for any outdoor excursion and more.

In addition to going weekly, executive producer Cecilia Nasti says there’s something new this season for listeners to look forward to. This season introduces Under the Texas Sky: The Wanderlist, a collaboration with Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine and editor Louie Bond. These twice-a-month Wanderlists introduce listeners to new places to go and things to see in Texas.

“I was looking for a way for Under the Texas Sky to collaborate with the magazine, and Wanderlist seemed like the perfect choice,” said Nasti. “Wanderlist has been my personal go-to when planning outdoor getaways and taking it from print to podcast seemed like a winner.”

Once a month, listeners can participate in TPWD social media posts about upcoming episodes and ask questions about select topics, then listen for answers on the following week’s podcast.

The first podcast episode of the new season is a Wanderlist with Louie Bond and associate producer Randall Maxwell. They talk about spring in bloom. Maxwell also has Andrea DeLong-Amaya, Director of Horticulture at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, answer listeners’ wildflower questions submitted via TPWD’s Instagram account @TexasParksWildlife.

Excerpt from Texas Governor Executive Order GA 14

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Texas, do hereby order the following on a statewide basis effective 12:01 a.m. on April 2, 2020, and continuing through April 30, 2020, subject to extension based on the status of COVID-19 in Texas and the recommendations of the CDC and the White House Coronavirus Task Force:

In accordance with guidance from DSHS Commissioner Dr. Hellerstedt, and to achieve the goals established by the President to reduce the spread of COVID-19, every person in Texas shall, except where necessary to provide or obtain essential services, minimize social gatherings and minimize in-person contact with people who are not in the same household.

“Essential services” shall consist of everything listed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in its Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce, Version 2.0, plus religious services conducted in churches, congregations, and houses of worship. Other essential services may be added to this list with the approval of the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM). TDEM shall maintain an online list of essential services, as specified in this executive order and in any approved additions. Requests for additions should be directed to TDEM at EssentialServices@tdem.texas.gov or by visiting www.tdem.texas.gov/essentialservices.

In providing or obtaining essential services, people and businesses should follow the Guidelines from the President and the CDC by practicing good hygiene, environmental cleanliness, and sanitation, implementing social distancing, and working from home if possible. In particular, all services should be provided through remote telework from home unless they are essential services that cannot be provided through remote telework. If religious services cannot be conducted from home or through remote services, they should be conducted consistent with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC by practicing good hygiene, environmental cleanliness, and sanitation, and by implementing social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, people shall avoid eating or drinking at bars, restaurants, and food courts, or visiting gyms, massage establishments, tattoo studios, piercing studios, or cosmetology salons; provided, however, that the use of drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options for food and drinks is allowed and highly encouraged throughout the limited duration of this executive order.

This executive order does not prohibit people from accessing essential services or engaging in essential daily activities, such as going to the grocery store or gas station, providing or obtaining other essential services, visiting parks, hunting or fishing, or engaging in physical activity like jogging or bicycling, so long as the necessary precautions are maintained to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and to minimize in-person contact with people who are not in the same household.

In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, people shall not visit nursing homes, state supported living centers, assisted living facilities, or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance as determined through guidance from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, schools shall remain temporarily closed to in-person classroom attendance and shall not recommence before May 4, 2020.

This executive order shall supersede any conflicting order issued by local officials in response to the COVID-19 disaster, but only to the extent that such a local order restricts essential services allowed by this executive order or allows gatherings prohibited by this executive order. I hereby suspend Sections 418.1015(b) and 418.108 of the Texas Government Code, Chapter 81, Subchapter E of the Texas Health and Safety Code, and any other relevant statutes, to the extent necessary to ensure that local officials do not impose restrictions inconsistent with this executive order, provided that local officials may enforce this executive order as well as local restrictions that are consistent with this executive order.