

## ***Pritzker Administration Launches Multi-Agency Effort to Bring Additional State Support to Highland Park and Surrounding Areas***

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**Highland Park, IL** – The Pritzker administration is bringing State agencies and contractors together to supplement local efforts to provide mental health and social service supports to residents affected by the July 4 tragedy in Highland Park.

The Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) directed its HealthChoice Illinois Medicaid Managed Care Organizations to provide access to crisis counseling and mental health support to the Highland Park community, and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) identified mental health professionals and community mental health agencies from its network to support local recovery efforts and assist in the healing process.

This builds on the work already underway through the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) to support local emergency response professionals.

In collaboration with the City of Highland Park, IDHS, HFS, IEMA, the Red Cross, and the HealthChoice Illinois Medicaid plans are enlisting volunteers to help staff a Resource Navigation Center. Located at Lincoln Elementary School (711 Lincoln Avenue) in Highland Park, the Center utilizes an appointment-based model to connect individuals with services specific to their needs.

Additionally, the [211 Lake County](#) helpline serves as the primary hub of verified social services, and trained 211 navigators will assist callers in English, Spanish, and other languages in accessing services from various providers or in making an appointment with an on-site navigator at Lincoln School. Information about how to make an appointment to see case managers is available on the City's web site at [cityhpil.com](http://cityhpil.com). The Resource Navigation Center is available to anyone impacted by the tragedy, regardless of immigration status.

HealthChoice Illinois Managed Care Organizations and others are volunteering time and resources to help staff the center with trained navigators to assist community members. Department of Veteran Affairs' Readjustment Counseling Service has a Mobile Vet Center located on-site to provide acute mental health services from licensed clinicians to the Highland Park community. Additional support at the Resource Navigation Center is provided by the Lake County Health Department Mobile Crisis Unit and Family Service of Lake County.

"Unifying our state and local supports for survivors of the July 4<sup>th</sup> tragedy in Highland Park is a crucial step in helping residents heal," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "In times of tragedy, our empathy for one another is Illinois' greatest strength, and I ask all our residents to help spread the word about these

resources with their loved ones. My administration will continue to make every resource available to Highland Park and all communities impacted by the plague of gun violence.”

“We want our programs to be there for people when they need them,” said **HFS Director Theresa Eagleson**. “Anyone impacted by this tragedy should be encouraged to tap into these services if they would be helpful. Mental and emotional wellness for the entire state is a priority for the Pritzker administration and this Department, and we will continue that commitment no matter what.”

In addition, at the Highwood Library & Community Center, the IDHS Office of Welcoming Centers for Refugee and Immigrant Services has arranged for Round Lake-based *Mano-a-Mano*, one of 36 *Illinois Welcoming Centers*, to provide multiple services targeted to Spanish speaking residents, including:

- Bilingual Counseling for Latinx community members
- Immigration Legal Services
- Onsite Public Benefits (e.g. TANF, Medicaid, SNAP, housing support) Application Sign-Up
- Emergency Monetary Aid for those who experienced financial strain due to their place of employment closing or their inability to return to work
- Interpretation Services

“This tragedy required a unified and unique package of relief, and I’m proud we have been able to identify creative ways to ensure no one who needs help is overlooked,” said **IDHS Secretary Grace Hou**. “Together we will help this anguished community continue to heal.”

To further support the diverse needs of the Highland Park/Highwood community, the Highland Park-based North Suburban Legal Aid Clinic has a full-scale immigration law practice with six on-staff attorneys, a law clerk and dedicated outreach coordinator providing free legal services to assist with U-visas, asylum applications, and all other forms of immigration relief. Bilingual English-Spanish assistance is available.

“The community of Highland Park, devastated by the shooting two weeks ago, continues to be in great need of a variety of services. I am grateful to Governor Pritzker’s administration for delivering these much-needed resources to those most affected,” said **state Sen. Julie Morrison (D-Lake Forest)**.

“Additionally, Bilingual and culturally sensitive counseling is crucial for so many who are apprehensive about coming forth for the help they need and deserve. The Highwood library and Community Center will continue to be a safety net and place for these resources for so many families affected by the shooting.”

“As the needs of our community evolve following the July 4th mass shooting, we are grateful to have additional human services resources from the State of Illinois,” said **state Rep. Bob Morgan (D-Deerfield)**. The aftershocks for those physically and psychologically impacted will require care coordination, and these programs will help our residents heal over time.”

“Lifting up and including families who are often marginalized is crucial in the aftermath of tragedy,” said **Dulce Ortiz, Executive Director of Mano-A-Mano Family Resource Center**. “We appreciate the leadership of Governor Pritzker and the strong partnership with State government to support all the residents of the communities we serve.”

“We are all so moved by the joint collaboration and efforts of the state and MCOs to quickly come together to support the community of Highland Park during this horrific tragedy,” said **Samantha Olds Frey, CEO of the Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans**. “Our members did not hesitate to corral their teams to help staff the support center that will offer crucial mental health services to help those affected in processing this trauma. I think there is something to be said for the entire MCO industry stepping up to volunteer their time to support those in need.”

HFS and IDHS continue to work together and with local partners on services for children and families in order to accelerate and maximize enrollment for eligible families in subsidized childcare, supplemental nutrition benefits, and Medicaid.

Although HealthChoice Illinois and the Medicaid program cover 1 in 4 Illinoisans, the services at the center are for everyone in the Highland Park and surrounding areas. People do not have to be a part of Medicaid to access these services.

IDHS' Division of Mental Health will continue to promote virtual supports including the Call4Calm line, the voice- and text-based 988 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and telehealth options from its network of more than 200 State-funded Community Mental Health Centers.

#### **About HealthChoice Illinois**

HealthChoice Illinois is the statewide Medicaid managed care program. Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) contract with the state to provide care coordination services for Medicaid customers. When Medicaid customers choose a plan, their primary care provider, specialists, and other healthcare providers work together to improve the health and wellbeing of Medicaid customers. Through their MCO, Medicaid customers have access to a care coordinator that can help find doctors, schedule appointments, get free transportation to medical appointments, manage prescriptions, and create an individual plan of care. The MCOs in HealthChoice Illinois are Aetna Better Health, Blue Cross Community Health Plans, CountyCare Health Plan, Meridian Health, and Molina Healthcare.

#### **About Medicaid**

Medicaid is a federal and state partnership that provides free health insurance for more than 3.5 million people in Illinois. People can usually get Medicaid if their income is low enough, but it is also for children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with disabilities. To apply for benefits, visit [abe.illinois.gov](http://abe.illinois.gov). Medicaid pays for things like doctor visits, treatments, hospital visits, prescription medicine, mental health care and transportation to medical appointments at no cost with no premiums or co-pays.

#### **About the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services**

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services is responsible for providing healthcare coverage for adults and children who qualify for Medicaid, and for providing Child Support Services to help ensure that Illinois children receive financial support from both parents. The department is organized into two major divisions, Medical Programs and Child Support Services. In addition, the Office of Inspector General is maintained within the agency, but functions as a separate, independent entity reporting directly to the governor's office.

#### **About IDHS**

The Department of Human Services is Illinois' largest State agency, with more than 13,000 employees. Created in 1997 to provide residents with streamlined access to services, IDHS is home to

the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention and six major programmatic areas, including the Divisions of: Developmental Disabilities, Early Childhood, Family and Community Services, Mental Health, Rehabilitation Services, and Substance Use Prevention & Recovery.

#### **About IEMA**

The primary responsibility of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) is to better prepare the State of Illinois for natural, manmade or technological disasters, hazards, or acts of terrorism. Our goal is a "better prepared state." IEMA coordinates the State's disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery programs and activities, functions as the State Emergency Response Commission, and maintains a 24-hour Communication Center and State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

#### **About Mano-a-Mano**

Mano-a-Mano is an IDHS-funded Welcoming Center headquartered in Round Lake Park, with a satellite location in Highland Park at the Lake County Health Department Clinic. Welcoming Centers exist to provide support for integrating immigrants and refugees in Illinois. The Illinois Welcoming Center's innovative model eliminates systemic barriers that immigrants may have in approaching state services.

#### **About the Illinois Red Cross**

The Red Cross prevents and alleviates suffering in the face of emergency by mobilizing the power of our volunteer network. The Red Cross continues to have volunteer case workers, health services, disaster mental health, spiritual care team members and more accessible, providing outreach to those community members impacted and in need of support.

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