



State of Vermont
Department of Mental Health
280 State Drive
Waterbury, VT 05671-1000

Agency of Human Services

For Immediate Release:

Press Contact:

Melissa Bailey

Commissioner, Dept. of Mental Health

802-241-0100 or Melissa.Bailey@vermont.gov

Mourning Fox

Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Mental Health

802-241-0100 or Mourning.Fox@vermont.gov

Support for those Struggling in Wake of Florida School Shooting

Waterbury, Vt., Feb. 17, 2018 – Some Vermonters may find in the wake of the mass shooting at a Florida high school earlier this week, as well as an averted threat in Fair Haven, Vt., that they are feeling anxious, depressed, having a hard time sleeping or having other feelings that are difficult to manage alone.

“Such events, horrific in themselves, can bring up old memories from personal experiences that were life-threatening,” said Melissa Bailey, Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Mental Health. “When that happens, we can feel overwhelmed and in need of some additional support to help us manage.”

Resources to support Vermonters including those experiencing stress and anxiety related to recent events and experiencing these feelings in general including isolation and bullying are listed below:

For immediate support, the **Vermont Crisis Text Line**TM provides free,¹ round-the-clock support, seven days a week by providing access via text messaging to trained Crisis Counselors. Vermonters can reach the Crisis Text Line by texting “VT” to 741741. Within 5 minutes the person in crisis or needing support will get an automated text and then a secure, private response from a trained Crisis Counselor. No private information is collected, and the text will not show up for Verizon, AT & T, Sprint or T-Mobile Carriers.

There are also mental health services available through any of **Vermont’s 10 Designated Agencies**. More information can be found here: <http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/individuals/designated-agencies>.

Parents especially may be concerned for their children’s safety and exposure to the media coverage. It is important to be aware of the measures your school has taken to keep students and teachers safe. Children typically are aware of the crisis, even if it’s just an awareness that their parent and other adults are upset. Tips for parents on media coverage and how to talk with and support children can be found here:

http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/tips_for_parents_media_final.pdf.

Teachers, or others working with groups can find resources and guidance online for helping students and others.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network:

Tips for educators to help youth after a community trauma, including some reactions you might see and how you can help.

http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/helping_youth_after_community_violence_educators.pdf

Responding to a school crisis

¹ For Verizon, AT&T, Sprint or T-Mobile carriers; all other carriers may charge rates.

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel/crisis-situation>

The **Pathways Vermont Support Line** is a free, confidential resource for Vermonters seeking support. They provide nonjudgmental, peer-to-peer support by phone at 833-VT-Talks

For all of us, it is important to find a balance of being informed and taking care of our stress reactions. The **American Psychological Association** has a helpful guide to managing your distress in the aftermath of a shooting <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/mass-shooting.aspx>.

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