

What is the Stay Well crisis counseling program?

The Stay Well crisis counseling program uses federal disaster grant funding to provide mental health support services to Michigan residents who are struggling to cope with emotional distress from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Funded by FEMA with training provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the program is managed by an emergency behavioral health task force within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Two-pronged approach

1. To help all Michigan residents, the grant team launched the Stay Well crisis counseling line in April 2020. Counseling is accessed by dialing Michigan's COVID-19 information hotline (1-888-535-6136) and pressing "8." It's free, confidential and available 24/7. Calls are answered by trained crisis counselors who provide psychoeducational and emotional support, as well as connection to community resources.
2. To help Michigan's hardest-hit residents, the grant team hired and trained outreach specialists assigned to 10 different vulnerable population groups in the state:
 - Seniors and older adults
 - Homeless individuals
 - Unemployed residents
 - Healthcare providers and first responders
 - School teachers and staff
 - Children and families
 - People experiencing racial/ethnic health disparities
 - Immigrants and limited-English-speaking residents
 - People with Substance Use Disorder
 - People with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Because outreach specialists cannot perform their work in person during the pandemic, they use a variety of other methods to reach the vulnerable groups. They partner with community-based organizations, houses of worship, and COVID testing sites; they create, market, and host psychoeducational webinars; they provide online and printed materials with helpful tips for staying mentally well; and they offer virtual group counseling/support groups upon request.

The program's three main goals

1. Validate, normalize, and humanize responses to the COVID pandemic (i.e., you are experiencing a normal response to an abnormal situation).
2. Encourage Michiganders to utilize Stay Well counseling to relieve continued distress.
3. Provide psychoeducation through a variety of media to promote good mental health practices.

Michigan.gov/StayWell