

MASStrong for Healthcare Workers program launched to provide mental health support to nursing home aides, home health workers, and personal care attendants

NORTHAMPTON, December 12, 2023

GPS Group Peer Support (GPS) announced today that it is enrolling healthcare workers in the MASStrong for Healthcare Workers program. MASStrong for Healthcare Workers provides group-based mental healthcare support to nursing home aides, home health workers, personal care attendants, and long-term care aides working in Massachusetts. Offered in partnership with the Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety, MASStrong for Healthcare Workers is based on a successful pilot program launched in 2021 with a \$1 million allocation of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The Commonwealth recently announced an additional allocation of \$5 million through the Behavioral Health Trust Fund to build on the program's success.

"Our pilot program was incredibly successful at addressing the mental health needs of healthcare workers. It is imperative that the people who care for our most vulnerable community members have access to care for themselves. We're proud to offer this resource to health care workers who provide care that is foundational to the quality of life of nursing home residents and people living with disabilities," said Liz Friedman, co-founder and CEO of GPS Group Peer Support. "We're grateful to Rep. Ruth Balser and Sen. Majority Leader Cynthia Creem for their unwavering support of MASStrong and the healthcare workforce, as well as the commitment of Senate President Karen Spilka and House Speaker Ron Mariano to this investment. The Commonwealth is fortunate to have lawmakers willing to champion innovative ways to address gaps in mental healthcare."

MASStrong for Healthcare Workers was created to address the burgeoning mental health crisis among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Overwhelming demand on the state's healthcare system during the pandemic caused high rates of depression, PTSD, insomnia, and other mental health issues among healthcare workers, causing dramatic increases in their rates of job-related illness and injury, including moral injury. As a result, healthcare institutions, especially nursing homes, have experienced steep staffing shortages.

MASStrong for Healthcare Workers employs the GPS model for group-based mental wellness support. The evidence- and research-based system draws on cognitive behavioral and interpersonal therapies, mindfulness-based stress reduction, motivational interviewing, and psycho-social education.



Sessions are led by skilled, non-clinical leaders. Just over 93 percent of participants in the MASStrong pilot reported that the program had been helpful, with nearly 60 percent reporting that it had been "very helpful." All participants reported that they would like to attend additional sessions, and every participant who knew other people working in the field said that they would recommend it to colleagues.

"I'm pleased that the legislature has funded this proven program to help the people who care for our most vulnerable residents develop the resilience needed to continue their life saving work," said Rep. Balser, a psychologist and leader on mental health public policy. "We need to

support our health care workforce and MASStrong for Healthcare Workers does just that in an efficient and cost-effective way."

"I'm proud to support funding for the MASStrong for Healthcare Workers program, an important tool to combat the high rates of burnout, depression, and other mental health issues that affect the healthcare workforce and contribute to the current workforce shortage," said Sen. Majority Leader Cynthia Creem. "Now, we need to get the word out to healthcare workers that there is support available that is tailored to their unique needs and experiences."

The MASStrong for Healthcare Workers program will be offered online via Zoom. Sessions will be available in English and Spanish. Each session lasts 90 minutes. Up to 1,300 healthcare workers will be able to participate across all sessions.

For more information about MASStrong for Healthcare workers, including how to register for sessions, please visit the Group Peer Support MASStrong page.

About GPS Group Peer Support

GPS Group Peer Support (GPS) offers accessible, evidence-based and trauma-informed mental wellness group support to individuals and communities during times of stress, challenge and change. The GPS model incorporates mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, peer-to-peer support, psychosocial education, and other evidence-based modalities. Rigorous research and outside evaluation of the GPS model has validated its effectiveness in diverse populations including parents dealing with post-partum depression, residents of rural areas living with chronic conditions, people dealing with substance use disorder, refugees, and survivors of war.



MORE INFORMATION:

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