

First Lady Chirlane McCray Announces \$1.7 Million ThriveNYC Geriatric Mental Health Expansion

Launches #ThriveWorksHere tour to highlight important work of ThriveNYC

NEW YORK (March 11, 2019) — First Lady Chirlane McCray, Department for the Aging (DFTA) acting Commissioner Caryn Resnick, and Senior Advisor to the Mayor and head of the Office of ThriveNYC Susan Herman announced today a \$1.7 million expansion of mental health services through the ThriveNYC DFTA Geriatric Mental Health Initiative. The funding will expand the program up to 25 additional senior centers, allowing DFTA to embed more licensed clinicians in centers across the City and help ensure seniors have access to mental health services to help them battle issues ranging from depression and anxiety to highly disruptive behaviors.

Prior to ThriveNYC, DFTA did not have ongoing, dedicated mental health services widely available on-site at senior centers. In 2016, the City funded these services in 25 senior centers across each borough through ThriveNYC. The announcement was made during a visit to the Council Center for Senior Citizens as part of the launch of #ThriveWorksHere, a series of tours highlighting the office's work in the city.

“Stigma and lack of resources keeps mental health in the shadows, preventing people from receiving the care they need and deserve,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. **“ThriveNYC’s Geriatric Mental Health Initiative is changing that by putting clinicians in senior centers across the city, and the evidence proves our approach is working. We are thrilled to continue the work of this critical program.”**

“We thank First Lady McCray for funding the expansion of vital mental health services and her commitment to diverse older New Yorkers,” said **Department for the Aging acting Commissioner Caryn Resnick**. **“We know that the Geriatric Mental Health program works and strengthens communities. DFTA is ready to help even more older adults overcome stigmas through confidential, on-site counseling at senior centers.”**

“Providing mental health services to seniors – who are often experiencing feelings of loneliness, depression and anxiety – is absolutely critical. And the results speak for themselves with the majority of seniors receiving on-site treatment experiencing an improvement in symptoms,” said Susan Herman, Senior Advisor to the Mayor, Office of Thrive NYC. “If we want to make a difference, we must meet people where there are. That’s what this program does. This is life changing work. We’re focusing on people at risk and going where they are—to reach as many as possible.”

"Mental health is a key element in successful aging. Meeting the mental health needs of older adults is a challenge as they often go undiagnosed or are mistakenly believed to be part of the normal aging process. Fortunately, older adults have found a voice through ThriveNYC -- a voice that is empowering them and giving them the tools they need to learn, grow and enjoy life," said Rosemarie Riola, Council Center for Senior Citizens Executive Director.

As of January 2019, more than 1,700 seniors have been assessed by mental health clinicians and nearly 700 have received mental health treatment.

ThriveNYC’s DFTA Geriatric Mental Health services are available in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Ukrainian. Seniors in need of mental health counseling are never turned away, regardless of their ability to pay.

DFTA is currently conducting an assessment to determine where the new Geriatric Mental Health sites will be placed. Factors being considered include the need for services and available space, as well as ensuring geographic, socioeconomic, and language needs of communities are met.

The related ThriveNYC DFTA Friendly Visiting Program for socially isolated seniors, NYC Well, and Mental Health First Aid trainings also offer support to seniors and New Yorkers in need of help.

For more information, call 311 and ask for the “geriatric mental health” program. New Yorkers of all ages in need of mental health help can contact NYC Well by calling 1-888-NYC-WELL, texting “WELL” to 65173, or by

visiting nyc.gov/nycwell. Free, confidential support is available any hour of the day in more than 200 languages.

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