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**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND TASKFORCE ON RACIAL INCLUSION & EQUITY  
ANNOUNCE EXPANSION OF NYC CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO  
ADDRESS DISPARATE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PEOPLE OF COLOR**

*Citywide NYC Care expansion means guaranteed health care for all New Yorkers; New mental health supports will reach 10,000 more residents*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor de Blasio, Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity co-chairs First Lady Chirlane McCray, Deputy Mayor J. Phillip Thompson, Deputy Mayor Dr. Raul Perea-Henze, and Executive Director Grace Bonilla today announced immediate action to expand access to primary healthcare providers through NYC Care. The program will now offer neighborhood-based mental health services to communities of color that have suffered disproportionately during the COVID-19 crisis.

"Our mission to bring affordable, quality healthcare to every New Yorker has never felt more urgent," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "COVID-19 exposed our city's most painful disparities, including access to medical care. By expanding NYC Care, we are tackling these inequities head on, and bringing affordable healthcare and mental health resources to the communities that need them the most."

"In this time of economic uncertainty and civil unrest, it is more critical than ever to get mental health resources and high-quality health care into communities of color to help stabilize families for generations to come," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. "I want black and brown New Yorkers living in these communities to know that your city sees you and we will not rest until your neighborhoods are healthier, stronger, safer and fairer now and after this crisis."

The Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity brings an equity-based approach to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts in the city's hardest-hit communities. The Taskforce will remain involved in program implementation in the weeks ahead, continuing to leverage community voices that inform ongoing engagement and developing long-term strategies to support community health and safety.

The services and supports are tailored to meet the unique challenges of New Yorkers in communities of color that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. City agencies conducted a survey with community members from these neighborhoods. Nearly 300 responses were received, and this feedback helped to inform the issue areas of the taskforce's work.

The Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity is committed to the work that all of us who serve have been committed to for decades. We hear our communities loud and clear, we need to do better to make sure that systems that are meant to serve New Yorkers are responsive today and always with the dignity and respect New Yorkers deserve,” said **Grace Bonilla, HRA Administrator and Executive Director of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity**. “By addressing the challenges faced by the hardest-hit neighborhoods that have been most impacted by decades of disparities and by working with our community leaders, we are taking the first steps towards healing together.”

### **Health Care Connections**

By September, every New Yorker in the hardest-hit communities will have access to guaranteed health care through the expansion of NYC Care to Queens and Manhattan. This includes hiring 26 providers to ensure a new primary care appointment within two weeks, public education materials, financial counseling services, and expanded pharmacy hours. New York City Health + Hospitals will also release a Requests For Proposals to engage community-based providers for community outreach and enrollment. The program has already launched in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island as part of the Mayor’s Guaranteed Care commitment, offering quality health care services at low or no-cost to New Yorkers who do not qualify for or cannot afford health insurance based on federal guidelines. To date, 22,705 New Yorkers have enrolled in NYC Care.

The City will also open three COVID-19 Centers of Excellence (COEs) by September 2020 to ensure increased access to primary care in some of the neighborhoods hardest-hit by COVID-19 in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx. More specifically, COEs will help New Yorkers treat and recover from COVID-19 outside of the hospital and prevent hospitalizations through testing and preventive care.

### **Mental Health Support**

Communities with the highest mental health needs may be the least likely to access mental health resources during and after the pandemic. This need is intensified by the tragic deaths of black men and women at the hands of law enforcement. Respondents to the City’s community survey articulated concerns like processing grief and loss, dealing with anxiety around job insecurity, managing social isolation, and other pandemic-related traumas.

The City will redirect mental health first aid (MHFA) staff to conduct a phased approach to deliver mental health disaster response and coping sessions to target populations. These sessions and trainings are projected to serve 10,000 residents in the hardest hit communities from July-December 2020 and will engage community and faith-based organizations across hardest hit communities to reach residents. More specifically:

Conduct 1-hour community (virtual) sessions on mental health disaster response and coping to community members, starting July 1st.

- Assemble lists of community organizations by neighborhood and recruit organizations (such as faith-based, non-profits, community organizations) to advertise availability of sessions to residents.
- Adapt DOHMH existing materials for community groups.

- Train existing MHFA staff to deliver sessions virtually and co-sponsor sessions with local community groups.

Develop and deliver a 2-3 hour, interactive session (virtually or in person), in hardest-hit communities starting this fall called "Taking Care of Yourself, Your Neighbor, and Your Community: An Equity-Centered Anti-Racist Mental Health Response to COVID-19". This session will innovate previous mental health disaster response approaches, which do not center issues of racial equity. More specifically:

- Incorporate scientifically-proven disaster response information/skill-building, adapted from psychological first aid.
- Incorporate analysis of structural racism -- as a root cause of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color -- with skill-based approaches in restorative and healing practices.
- Offer participants information/skills to increase ability to care and cope for themselves and others.
- Demystify common mental health challenges to encourage help-seeking behavior and empathy.
- Provide participants with information about local mental health support, treatment, as well as NYC Well availability 24/7 for crisis support and counseling and referral to mental health treatment.
- Develop staff training to conduct train-the-trainer sessions with staff from organizations in hardest hit communities.

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