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Phone: (323) 419-3141

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On World Mental Health Day Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services Prioritizes Support for Election Anxiety, Substance Use, and Youth Mental Health
National Leader Offers Resources for Election Anxiety, Substance Use Prevention, and Youth Support During US and Worldwide Awareness Initiatives

Culver City, CA — October 10, 2024 – In recognition of [World Mental Health Day](#) on October 10, [Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services](#) (Didi Hirsch) is spotlighting critical mental health challenges impacting our community today, including election anxiety, substance use and overdose, suicide and the impact of bullying and social media on youth. As a national leader in whole-person mental health, crisis care, and substance use services with decades of experience serving children, youth, and families, Didi Hirsch is committed to providing compassionate, comprehensive support across this breadth of complex mental health challenges.

"World Mental Health Day serves as an important reminder that mental well-being is a right that should be accessible to all, regardless of circumstances," said Kristine Santoro, PhD, Chief Health and Innovation Officer for Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services. "From managing election-related stress to supporting youth mental health, we are here to provide the tools and resources our communities need to thrive."

Addressing Election-related Anxiety and Depression

As the 2024 presidential election approaches, Didi Hirsch recognizes the significant mental health strain many individuals face during the election season. A recent [Pew Research Center](#) survey revealed that 65% of U.S. adults frequently or consistently feel drained by politics, while 55% often or always experience anger.

According to the [American Psychological Association](#), nearly half of U.S. adults report politics as a major source of stress, leading to issues like lost sleep, irritability, and obsessive thoughts, with separate studies revealing political events worsen emotional reactivity and physical health.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, operated by Didi Hirsch in Los Angeles and surrounding communities, is available 24/7 for anyone feeling overwhelmed. People don't need to be in a suicidal crisis to call 988; the service also provides immediate support for anyone dealing with anxiety, stress, or depressive feelings related to the election.

"Our dedicated crisis counselors are here to listen without judgment and help people manage their stress," said Shari Sinwelski, MS/EdS, LPCC, NCC, Vice President of Crisis Care for Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services. "You're not alone in feeling overwhelmed during this time, and reaching out for support can make a significant difference."

Substance Use and Harm Reduction

October is also [National Substance Use Prevention Month](#) and Didi Hirsch, which is unique in its ability to offer integrated substance use and mental health services for teens and adults, has a long history of care focused on substance use prevention and harm reduction. More than half of people with mental illness also have a co-occurring substance use disorder.

Didi Hirsch's Via Avanta program (Spanish for "The Way Forward"), exemplifies our commitment to providing comprehensive care for individuals struggling with addiction. Established in 1979, the residential

treatment program was one of the first in the county to recognize the importance of keeping mothers and their young children together during treatment, providing essential support for both and breaking cycles of addiction and trauma.

The ongoing opioid crisis continues to devastate communities, but resources like Narcan distribution and Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT) can save lives. Didi Hirsch's harm reduction programs provide critical overdose prevention services and treatment pathways for those struggling with addiction and provides prevention and treatment services for individuals in both outpatient and inpatient settings.

"Through our residential treatment programs and harm reduction efforts, including Narcan distribution, we are preventing overdoses and supporting people find long-term recovery," said Stephanie Halpern, Assistant Medical Director for Didi Hirsch. "Our goal is to empower individuals with the resources they need to reclaim their futures."

Youth Mental Health and the Impact of Social Media and Bullying

Didi Hirsch is also drawing attention to [National Bullying Prevention Month](#) and the negative mental health impact social media can have on youth. Governor Gavin Newsom's recent signing of [a bill to protect children from social media addiction](#) highlights the growing concern over how digital platforms can contribute to mental health struggles, including cyberbullying, anxiety, and isolation among adolescents.

With programs like [Teen Line](#), Didi Hirsch offers peer-to-peer support for teens facing bullying, stress, and social media pressures. Teen Line provides a safe space for young people to discuss their challenges and access resources that support their mental health.

"Bullying and social media pressures can have a profound impact on youth, and contribute to/exacerbate anxiety, depression, and in some cases, even suicidal thoughts," said Cheryl Eskin, Senior Director of Teen Line. "At Didi Hirsch, we are committed to helping young people navigate these challenges through compassionate peer support and therapeutic programs."

Teen Line, Didi Hirsch's peer-to-peer youth-led hotline, connects youth from across the United States (and even the world) to highly trained, compassionate Teen Listeners who provide support, validation and connection to resources. In 2023, Teen Line fielded more than 8,000 calls, texts and emails from teens in need of support. Recognizing the important roles schools play in supporting youth mental health, the Teen Line Teacher Facilitation Guide also reached 156 schools and over 25,000 (25,175) youth last year.

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About Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Southern California, has been a national leader in mental health, crisis care and substance use services for more than 80 years. As a pioneer in suicide prevention and crisis care for all ages, Didi Hirsch is home to the nation's first and most comprehensive Suicide Prevention Center. Didi Hirsch is the largest crisis center for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in California and one of the largest centers in the U.S. Didi Hirsch also operates Teen Line, the leading youth peer-to-peer hotline, and partners with the Los Angeles Police Department to divert mental health crisis calls from 911. The Suicide Prevention Center serves as a model of care internationally and provides outpatient therapy and crisis counseling, support groups for survivors of suicide loss and suicide attempts, and suicide prevention training for the community. Learn more at www.didihirsch.org.

About World Mental Health Day

[World Mental Health Day](#), celebrated annually on October 10th, aims to raise awareness of mental health issues and promote global support for individuals experiencing mental illness. This year's theme

encourages open conversations about mental health, reducing stigma, and fostering a supportive environment for all.

About National Substance Use Prevention Month

[National Substance Use Prevention Month](#) in October seeks to educate and empower communities to prevent substance use disorders. By promoting healthy choices, providing resources, and raising awareness about the risks associated with substance abuse, this initiative aims to create a safer and healthier society for all.

About National Bully Prevention Month

[National Bully Prevention Month](#) in October focuses on raising awareness about bullying and promoting a culture of kindness and respect. By encouraging schools, communities, and individuals to stand up against bullying, this initiative aims to create safe and inclusive environments for everyone.