



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## Mental Health Offers 'Starting Over Strong' Services After the Flood

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BURLINGTON – The Vermont Department of Mental Health is now offering crisis counseling, emotional support and psychological first aid to Vermonters most affected by last month's flooding, thanks to a short-term grant from FEMA.

Starting today, anyone in need can call toll-free 855-SOS-VT00 (855-767-8800) to access 'Starting Over Strong' (SOS) services.

Washington County Mental Health Services will administer Starting Over Strong, and lead teams of crisis support workers from around the state. SOS will coordinate with community mental health agencies and local organizations to support their ongoing local and state recovery efforts. The program is expected to be fully staffed in most of the hardest-hit communities by October 17.

"Most Vermonters were affected in one way or another by the historic flooding this fall, but some suffered extreme loss and trauma," said Mental Health Commissioner Christine Oliver. "SOS can help communities, families and individuals of all ages recover from the emotional stress after the flood."

SOS is a short-term effort designed to help up to 3,000 people better understand and cope with their current situation and experiences from the flood, review disaster recovery options, and find healthy ways to deal with loss and stress. People who may be in need of more intensive support or treatment will be referred to community services and agencies.

Health planner Katina Cummings, MCP of Montpelier has been hired by FEMA to serve as SOS project director. The Department of Mental Health plans to apply for additional funding from FEMA to continue the program through July 2012.

To find more information about taking care of your mental and emotional health throughout the storm recovery effort, go to <http://healthvermont.gov> and choose 'After the Flood.'

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