

# ASSEMBLY, No. 1847

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

**Sponsored by:**

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**District 34 (Essex and Passaic)**

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**SYNOPSIS**

Requires Commissioner of Human Services to establish 24-hour, toll-free Mental Illness Crisis Resource Hotline and develop hotline connection system to ensure that callers are connected to other appropriate hotlines when needed.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 AN ACT concerning the establishment of a Mental Illness Crisis  
2 Resource Hotline, and the connection of callers to other  
3 appropriate State-run hotlines, and supplementing Title 30 of the  
4 Revised Statutes.

5

6 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
7 of New Jersey:

8

9 1. a. The Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation  
10 with the Commissioners of Health, Community Affairs, and  
11 Children and Families, shall establish and maintain, on a 24 hour a  
12 day basis, a toll-free Mental Illness Crisis Resource telephone  
13 hotline service. The hotline service shall receive and respond to  
14 calls from persons who are undergoing, or who are seeking help for  
15 a person who is undergoing, a crisis or emergency situation  
16 resulting from mental illness. Hotline staff shall provide emergency  
17 counseling to callers, in an effort to stabilize the crisis or  
18 emergency situation, and shall promptly connect callers to other  
19 appropriate State and local resources that can be used to  
20 immediately address and eliminate the crisis or emergency  
21 situation. To the extent practicable, callers shall be connected with  
22 resources that are available in the same county or region of the State  
23 in which the crisis or emergency situation is occurring.

24 b. The Mental Illness Crisis Resource Hotline, established  
25 pursuant to this section, shall be staffed by licensed professional  
26 counselors, psychologists, psychoanalysts, and social workers who  
27 have particular experience in mental health crisis intervention,  
28 including experience in communicating with persons in mental  
29 health crisis, and their families, and who have particular training  
30 and knowledge in the institutional and community-based resources  
31 that are available throughout the State to assist persons who are  
32 undergoing a mental health crisis, and their families. The  
33 commissioner shall ensure that the hotline is staffed by persons with  
34 diverse ethnic backgrounds, and includes persons who speak both  
35 English and Spanish. The commissioner shall further ensure that  
36 the hotline either employs or contracts with translators and bi- or  
37 multi-lingual health care professionals who can be made available  
38 to assist callers, upon request, or when needed.

39 c. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1 of P.L.1991,  
40 c.524 (C.30:1-1.1), and any other law, rule, or regulation to the  
41 contrary, the crisis hotline established pursuant to this section shall  
42 be operated separately and apart from the social services  
43 information hotline established pursuant to subsection a. of section  
44 1 of P.L.1991, c.524 (C.30:1-1.1), the mental health and  
45 developmental disabilities services hotline established pursuant to  
46 subsection c. of section 1 of P.L.1991, c.524 (C.30:1-1.1), and any  
47 community-based suicide hotlines established pursuant to section 2  
48 of P.L.1985, c.195 (C.30:9A-13).

- 1       d. (1) The commissioner shall engage in a public awareness  
2 campaign, using all available media, including television, radio,  
3 print, the Internet, and social media, to inform the public about the  
4 availability and purpose of the Mental Illness Crisis Resource  
5 Hotline.
- 6       (2) The public awareness campaign developed under this  
7 subsection shall include a component that is specifically designed to  
8 inform children and young adults in elementary school, high school,  
9 and institutions of higher education about the availability of the  
10 hotline. Posters, signs, and other promotional materials used in this  
11 component of the public awareness campaign shall employ the use  
12 of language that is understandable by, and appropriate to, children  
13 and young adults.
- 14       (3) Any promotional materials that are used in the public  
15 awareness campaign shall be made available in both English and  
16 Spanish.
- 17       e. The Departments of Human Services, Health, Children and  
18 Families, Community Affairs, Education, and Law and Public  
19 Safety shall each prominently display the phone number for the  
20 Mental Illness Crisis Resource Hotline on the departments'  
21 respective Internet websites.
- 22       f. As used in this section:
- 23       “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Human Services.
- 24       “Health care professional” means a physician, nurse, or other  
25 individual who is licensed by the State to provide health care in the  
26 ordinary course of business or the practice of a profession.
- 27       “Professional counselor” means an individual who is licensed as  
28 a professional counselor, pursuant to P.L.1993, c.340 (C.45:8B-  
29 34 et seq.), and whose license remains in good standing.
- 30       “Psychologist” means an individual who is licensed as a  
31 practicing psychologist, pursuant to P.L.1966, c.282 (C.45:14B-  
32 1 et seq.), and whose license remains in good standing.
- 33       “Psychoanalyst” means an individual who is certified as a  
34 psychoanalyst, pursuant to P.L.2000, c.57 (C.45:14BB-1 et seq.),  
35 and whose certification remains in good standing.
- 36       “Social worker” means an individual who is certified as a social  
37 worker or licensed as a clinical social worker, pursuant to P.L.1991,  
38 c.134 (C.45:15BB-1 et seq.), and whose license or certification  
39 remains in good standing.
- 40       “Mental illness” means the same as that term is defined by  
41 section 2 of P.L.1987, c.116 (C.30:4-27.2).
- 42
- 43       2. a. The Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation  
44 and coordination with the Commissioner of Health, shall develop a  
45 system that requires and enables the staff of any health or human  
46 services-related hotline in the State, including, but not limited to,  
47 the social services information hotline established pursuant to  
48 subsection a. of section 1 of P.L.1991, c.524 (C.30:1-1.1), the

1 mental health and developmental disabilities services hotline  
2 established pursuant to subsection c. of section 1 of P.L.1991, c.524  
3 (C.30:1-1.1), the Mental Illness Crisis Resource Hotline established  
4 pursuant to section 1 of P.L. , c. (C. ) (pending before the  
5 Legislature as this bill), the community-based suicide hotlines  
6 established pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1985, c.195 (C.30:9A-13),  
7 and the NJ 2-1-1 hotline, to immediately connect callers to other  
8 appropriate State or federal hotlines, as needed to address the  
9 callers' stated needs and issues. The hotline connection system  
10 designed pursuant to this section shall ensure, to the greatest extent  
11 practicable, that whenever a person calls a health or human  
12 services-related hotline in the State that is inappropriate to their  
13 needs, the hotline staff will immediately and directly transfer the  
14 caller to another appropriate hotline, without ending the call.

15 b. The Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation with  
16 the Commissioner of Health, shall adopt rules and regulations  
17 pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410  
18 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), as may be necessary to implement the hotline  
19 connection system required by this section.

20

21 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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#### STATEMENT

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26 This bill would require the Commissioner of Human Services, in  
27 consultation with the Commissioners of Health, Community  
28 Affairs, and Children and Families, to establish and maintain, on a  
29 24 hour a day basis, a toll-free Mental Illness Crisis Resource  
30 telephone hotline service. The hotline would be operated separately  
31 and apart from the State's existing social services information  
32 hotline, the State's existing mental health and developmental  
33 disabilities services hotline, and any community-based suicide  
34 hotlines.

35 The Mental Illness Crisis Resource Hotline would be used to  
36 receive and respond to calls from persons who are undergoing, or  
37 who are seeking help for a person who is undergoing, a crisis or  
38 emergency situation resulting from mental illness. Hotline staff  
39 would be required to provide emergency counseling to callers, in an  
40 effort to stabilize the crisis or emergency situation, and would  
41 additionally be required to promptly connect callers to other  
42 appropriate State and local resources that can be used to  
43 immediately address and eliminate the crisis or emergency  
44 situation. To the extent practicable, callers are to be connected with  
45 resources that are available in the same county or region of the State  
46 in which the crisis or emergency situation is occurring.

47 The bill would require the Mental Illness Crisis Resource Hotline  
48 to be staffed by licensed or certified professional counselors,

1 psychologists, psychoanalysts, and social workers who have  
2 particular experience in mental health crisis intervention, including  
3 experience in communicating with persons in mental health crisis,  
4 and their families, and who have particular training and knowledge  
5 in the institutional and community-based resources that are  
6 available throughout the State to assist persons who are undergoing  
7 a mental health crisis, and their families. The hotline is to be  
8 staffed by persons with diverse ethnic backgrounds, including  
9 persons who speak both English and Spanish. The commissioner  
10 will also be required to ensure that the hotline either employs or  
11 contracts with translators and bi- or multi-lingual health care  
12 professionals who can be made available to assist callers, upon  
13 request, or when needed.

14 The commissioner will be required to engage in a public  
15 awareness campaign, using all available media, to inform the public  
16 about the availability and purpose of the Mental Illness Crisis  
17 Resource Hotline. The campaign is to include a component that is  
18 specifically designed to inform children and young adults in  
19 elementary school, high school, and institutions of higher education  
20 about the availability of the hotline. Posters, signs, and other  
21 promotional materials used in this component of the public  
22 awareness campaign are to employ the use of language that is  
23 understandable by, and appropriate to, children and young adults.  
24 Any promotional materials used in the public awareness campaign  
25 are to be made available in both English and Spanish.

26 The bill would require the Departments of Human Services,  
27 Health, Children and Families, Community Affairs, Education, and  
28 Law and Public Safety to each prominently display the phone  
29 number for the Mental Illness Resource Hotline on the departments'  
30 respective Internet websites.

31 The bill would additionally require the Commissioner of Human  
32 Services, in consultation and coordination with the Commissioner  
33 of Health, to develop a system that requires and enables the staff of  
34 any health or human services-related hotline in the State (including  
35 the Mental Illness Resource Hotline established under the bill) to  
36 immediately connect callers to other appropriate State or federal  
37 hotlines, as needed to address the callers' stated needs and issues.  
38 The hotline connection system is to ensure, to the greatest extent  
39 practicable, that whenever a person calls a health or human  
40 services-related hotline in the State that is inappropriate to their  
41 needs, the hotline staff will immediately and directly transfer the  
42 caller to another appropriate hotline, without ending the call. The  
43 establishment of this type of hotline connection system will prevent  
44 instances where a person seeking help is denied assistance because  
45 the hotline is not appropriate for the person's needs.