

Lives Literally Depend on Access to Behavioral Health Care

May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

"While I think it is positive to designate a month to highlight the importance of a cause, I think that in the case of mental health for children and adults, it must be part of our everyday vocabulary and mind-set. With the increasing frequency of natural and man-made disasters, we are seeing much greater demand for mental health and addiction treatment services, as individuals try to make sense of abnormal events and irrational actions, to cope and, literally and metaphorically, to pick up the pieces of their lives," wrote Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D., CEO of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, in an op-ed piece that was published in the Courier Post Online.

"Looking back at the tragedies that occurred over the past eight months, as a state, nation and society, we give pause to the thought that we cannot make providing easy access to mental health and addictions prevention, treatment and other services, a once-in-a-while action," Dr. Wentz added.

"Our highest priority must be to educate everyone about mental illnesses and addictions and the need for education, prevention and adequate services throughout the entire continuum of care," she stressed.

"No matter where we sit in society from economic status to education, regardless of our age, race or religion, we or someone close to us will likely need mental healthcare and substance use treatment services at some time in our lives. All types of behavioral health support must be at the ready 365 days of the year. Lives literally depend on it."

Visit the Opinion section of www.courierpostonline.com to read the entire article.