

NH HEALTH

# New campaign aims to publicize mental health and substance use services

The “Strong as Granite” campaign is also designed to help reduce the stigma around asking for help

By [Amanda Gokee](#) Globe Staff, Updated August 29, 2023, 4:33 p.m.



Billboards are one part of the state's new "Strong as Granite" campaign to increase awareness and reduce stigma around seeking help for substance use and mental health. JENNY O'HIGGINS

CONCORD, N.H. — The Department of Health and Human Services is launching a nearly \$1.3 million media campaign to raise awareness about the behavioral health services offered across the state and reduce the stigma around seeking help.

Billboards have gone up in Rochester and in Somersworth, with five more scheduled to go up this week, according to Jenny O’Higgins, a senior policy analyst in the department’s behavioral health division.

The “Strong as Granite” campaign aims to direct residents who are struggling with mental health, substance use disorder, and suicidality to services like the state’s rapid response phone number (833-710-6477), the 211 NH number, the Doorway referral system to help people access treatment, and the national 988 number.

It also includes a website and social media advertisements that will launch in September, along with radio and television advertisements.

“We want to make sure that people know how to access care,” O’Higgins said. She said the campaign reflects broader changes in how the state handles behavioral health issues, trying to approach the topic in a non-judgmental way, using positive language, and taking an integrated approach.

That means if a person is seeking care for substance use disorder but also experiencing suicidality, they would be able to easily get treatment for both.

When people call the rapid response number, operators can deploy mobile crisis teams through the state’s 10 mental health centers. This is part of what’s called the “crisis now model,” which has three pillars: someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere to go. In the future, the state is planning to pilot crisis stabilization centers, O’Higgins said.

“The campaign is meant to be broad and upstream, so people can call early and often and do not need to wait until a time of crisis,” O’Higgins said.

The department contracted with Initium Health based in Denver, Colo., to develop and implement the campaign. A \$759,999 contract was approved in [September 2022](#). In March, it was expanded to include \$500,000 more in State Opioid Response funding, toward the [\\$1.25 million campaign](#) to be completed by the end of June 2024.

The department is also targeting the advertisements based on demographics. For instance, a Manchester billboard for 211 focused on substance use awareness will target women between 30 and 40. In May 2023, the city had 17 overdose deaths, the second highest of cities in the state. The median age is 36 and most opioid use happens in people between 30 and 40, according to department data.

Alcohol use is common among a younger demographic: men between 18 and 34 and women from 18 to 25.

A billboard in Rochester is designed to raise awareness of substance use and targets a demographic of women between 18 and 25. According to the department, Rochester is the third highest city for overdose deaths and Narcan use.

A third billboard in Suncook is meant to address mental health crises in men aged 40 to 55 because the department found middle aged men are at an increased risk of suicide.

O'Higgins said the campaign is aspirational and meant to highlight how an individual's recovery benefits the entire community, reducing the burden on law enforcement and health care providers.

"The New Hampshire I want to live in and want my kids to grow up in is a place where we make connections, not judgements," she said. "We care deeply that when people get well so do communities."

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