

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Alliance Opens Psychological Service Program

This community program will aid those who are uninsured/underinsured in our area.

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. - On Thursday, August 17, The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness invited special guests Congressmen Ted Deutch (D-FL, 21) and Brian Mast (R-FL, 18) and State Representatives Lori Berman (D, 90) and Jared Moskowitz (D, 97) to help officially open The Alliance's new Psychological Service Program, a community program to aid those who are uninsured/underinsured in the area.

This first-of-its-kind program will offer direct life-saving treatment in an outpatient setting to those affected by eating disorders. Supervised by their Clinical Director, Dr. Joann Hendelman, who has more than 40 years of experience working with eating disorders, two post-doctoral Fellows will see a minimum of 75 unduplicated patients a year, averaging 20 sessions per week. Evidence-based intervention and care will determine patient session frequency.

The Clinical Director will supervise both Fellows to ensure that the specialized care being provided is effective and meets current scientifically based standards of care. All clients receiving care through the psychological services program will be assessed upon entry into the program, at every session, and three months after discharge using an evidence-based outcome measure.

"Eating disorders do not discriminate. They affect people of all sex, age, race, body shape and weight, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Recovery should not be a privilege and everybody deserves access to care," stated Johanna Kandel, the CEO of The Alliance. "There are many Floridians who do not have access to adequate coverage so we potentially have thousands of people in Palm Beach County who urgently need treatment. We hope this program will fill that gap."

Goals of the Alliance's new program include meeting the needs of the community by decreasing eating disorder acuity through specialized care and increasing awareness and treatment for eating disorders. Simultaneously, the Alliance intends for this program to inspire patient hopefulness for a life in recovery.

Early intervention and treatment is critical for an individual to fully recover from an eating disorder. This program will provide direct access to proper care, raise awareness, and provide life-saving treatment for those struggling with eating disorders who would otherwise not obtain the effective treatment needed to recover.

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Every 62 minutes someone dies as a direct result of their eating disorder which equates to 23 individuals a day. The National Institute of Health has reported that the occurrence of eating disorders has grown in all countries and across all social classes. Eating disorders are more common than autism and Alzheimer's disease, more deadly than drunk driving, and even more costly than depression and anxiety. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness and are not a lifestyle choice. They are genetically, environmentally, and psychologically influenced mental illnesses. Nationally, an estimated 30 million Americans are battling eating disorders with upwards of 700,000 individuals suffering in Florida alone.

Eating disorders can cause significant physical and psychological complications that impede one's ability to maintain normal, daily functioning including one's ability to work. As a result, one in four individuals with an eating disorder is unemployed and receive disability, Medicare, or Medicaid. Many of these plans offer limited mental health benefits and specialized treatment providers, many of whom have no training or experience working with eating disorders.

The Alliance receives an average of 100+ referral inquires per week, 2/3 of them from Palm Beach County, many from disadvantaged family members and individuals with little or no insurance seeking eating disorder treatment. This puts us in a very grim position as there are few treatment providers who will work with uninsured families leaving them vulnerable with no resources for proper treatment. While there are existing community psychological services, there are none that specialize in treating eating disorders.

About The Alliance:

The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness ("The Alliance") is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to providing programs and activities aimed at outreach, education, and early intervention for all eating disorders. Founded in October 2000, The Alliance has worked tirelessly to raise awareness, eliminate secrecy and stigma, promote access to care, and support those susceptible to, currently struggling with, and recovered from eating disorders. We advocate for health promotion including a positive body image free from weight preoccupation and size prejudice. We create a bridge for those needing and seeking help by connecting people with resources to assist them in recovery. Over the past 17 years, The Alliance has offered comprehensive services including: educational presentations to schools (upper elementary through doctoral level students), healthcare providers offices and hospitals, treatment centers, and community agencies, free support groups for those struggling and for their loved ones; advocacy for eating disorders and mental health legislation (including the passage of the 21st Century Cures Act which contains the first ever eating disorder legislation), a national toll-free phone help line, and referrals and mentoring services. In addition, we are just launched our new interactive website, www.findedhelp.com, to assist individuals seeking all levels of specialized care. Since its inception, The Alliance has offered presentations on eating disorders, positive body image, and self-esteem to more than 290,000 individuals nationwide.

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