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MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK CITY LAUNCHES NEW PROGRAM TO HELP COPE WITH STRESS IN AN UNCERTAIN ECONOMY

***Staying In Balance* Offers Help to Those Who Help New Yorkers**

New York, NY – January 20, 2010 – The Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC) announced today the launch of a groundbreaking new program to promote emotional wellness and organizational health during the current economic crisis. ***Staying in Balance: Managing Stress in an Uncertain Economy*** is designed to help employees, volunteers and clients respond in healthy ways to the high levels of emotional distress created by the economic recession. *Staying in Balance* offers a toolkit, training and materials to support social service organizations that deliver critical assistance to New Yorkers who have been impacted by the recession.

Resources are also available online for the general public. The ***Staying in Balance*** toolkit and additional materials including a client booklet *Finding Your Way: Your Guide to Getting Through Tough Economic Times* (available in English and Spanish), are available on the MHA-NYC website (www.mhaofnyc.org).

Supported by a grant from The New York Community Trust, MHA-NYC staff will offer expert training to key staff members at eight New York Community Trust-funded safety net organizations including The Bridge Fund, Legal Services of New York, New York City Financial Network Action Consortium, City Meals-on-Wheels, Cancer Care, City Harvest, Food Bank for New York City and United Neighborhood Houses. These experts will provide the organizations with:

- Tailored training with protocols for understanding, assessing, and responding to clients' emotional distress including education to recognize the difference between normal responses to stress and responses that require professional help and skills to help staff members diffuse hostile client situations;
- A *Staying in Balance* Toolkit that provides organizations with strategies to reduce workplace stress;
- Bilingual materials (print and web-based) that both clients and staff can use to manage stress and to access relevant resources;
- Guidance on when and how to refer emotionally fragile clients to 1-800-LifeNet, New York City's primary 24/7 mental health crisis, information and referral hotline or 1-800-273-TALK, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline; and
- Opportunities for agency staff to ask questions, compare notes, share strategies, and exchange knowledge through in-person meetings.

“We know from the experience of helping Americans cope with disasters that frontline staff needs tools to help individuals in crisis manage their stress,” said Giselle Stolper, Executive Director of the Mental

Health Association of New York City. “*Staying in Balance* is one way in which MHA-NYC is responding to the emotional needs of those experiencing the financial crisis.”

“As we planned our response in 2009 to the economic meltdown, we knew that we would have to deal with the increase in depression and family violence that results from this kind of stress,” said Joyce Bove, Senior Vice President for Grants and Special Projects at The New York Community Trust. “As grantmakers, we are fortunate to be able to rely on MHA-NYC to use our money efficiently and effectively.”

“One of our chief aims is to help community leaders understand and respond to the mental health needs of their constituents,” added Stolper. “We have established ourselves as a first port of call to link people in emotional stress to the resources they need. *Staying in Balance* will help New Yorkers stay strong and resilient.”

More than 20 trainers have already been trained by MHA-NYC experts to deliver *Staying in Balance* to participating safety net organization and hundreds of their affiliated agencies. The *Staying in Balance* training and toolkit will be made available to wider audiences of social service providers in the coming months.

“The Food Bank For New York City is pleased to be included in this important program,” said Dr. Lucy Cabrera, Ph.D., President & CEO of the Food Bank For New York City. “We understand the importance of recognizing the pressures that our members face as front line providers in New York City. In recent months, we’ve seen an unprecedented demand for services that cross both cultural and economic lines. And we’ve seen people seek out our services who have never before turned to us for help. These combined factors have put enormous pressure on our members. We believe that *Staying in Balance* will prove to be a great tool to assist our members and those they serve to better deal with this stress in a healthy way.”

Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC) is a non-profit organization that addresses mental health needs in New York City and across the nation. It is a local organization with national impact and has a three-part mission of advocacy, education and mental health services. MHA-NYC identifies unmet needs and develops culturally sensitive services and programs to improve lives while promoting the importance of mental wellness. www.mhaofnyc.org

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