



utah department of
human services

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News Release

New Plan Unveiled to Help Stop Suicides in Utah

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Suicide prevention experts from the Utah Department of Health (UDOH), Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH), and Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition unveiled a new plan to help stop suicides in Utah. The plan couldn't be timelier; as suicide claimed 609 Utahns in 2015, for a rate of 24.5 per 100,000 population ages 10+. Every suicide death causes a ripple effect of immeasurable pain to individuals, families, and communities throughout the state.

“Everyone plays a role in suicide prevention and it is up to each one of us to help create communities which are strong in factors that protect people from suicide,” said Andrea Hood, suicide prevention expert with the UDOH. “The new plan outlines strategies to help communities accomplish this by describing ways to improve resiliency, crisis response, mental health treatment, and early identification of mental health conditions.”

Suicide is a complex issue influenced by individual, family, relational, community, and societal factors. Prevention strategies must address the factors that increase risk for suicide and the factors that protect from suicide risk. The new Utah Suicide Prevention Plan is structured around the following protective factors:

- Increasing availability and access to quality physical and behavioral health care
- Increasing social norms supportive of help-seeking and recovery
- Reducing access to lethal means, such as firearms
- Increasing connectedness to individuals, family, community, and social institutions by creating safe and supportive school and community environments
- Increasing safe media portrayals of suicide and adoption of safe messaging principles
- Increasing coping and problem solving skills
- Increasing support to survivors of suicide loss
- Increasing prevention and early intervention for mental health problems, suicide ideation and behaviors, and substance misuse
- Increasing comprehensive data collection and analysis regarding risk and protective factors for suicide to guide prevention efforts

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“Over the last few years our state has come a long way in understanding and addressing suicide. This plan represents the progress we have made and the foundation we have built for suicide prevention,” said Kim Myers, suicide prevention coordinator with the DSAMH.

The new plan highlights evidence-based strategies that are tried and true steps communities can take to build resiliency, create safety nets for those in crisis, and ultimately save lives in Utah. The plan also has a greater emphasis on social connectedness than previous statewide efforts.

The Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition will oversee implementation of the plan. The coalition is a partnership of community members, suicide survivors, service providers, researchers, and others dedicated to saving lives and advancing suicide prevention efforts in Utah. To learn how to get involved or for a copy of the plan, visit <http://utahsuicideprevention.org>.

“We have a more comprehensive, collaborative approach to suicide prevention in Utah than ever before,” said Hood. “Our hope is that the strategies we are all working so hard on will save lives and bring hope to those who are feeling alone or hopeless, because each life matters.”

All suicidal thoughts, behaviors, and attempts should be taken seriously. Get help 24/7 by calling the Statewide CrisisLine at 801-587-3000 or the National Suicide Prevention LifeLine at 1-800-273-TALK. Help is also available online at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org. Trained consultants will provide free and confidential crisis counseling to anyone in need.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.