

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | February 23, 2021

Human Services' Behavioral Health Division enhancing suicide prevention efforts in ND

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division announces grant funding opportunities for local government organizations, community nonprofit or private organizations and tribal nations to further suicide prevention efforts in the state. The 2021 North Dakota Suicide Prevention Grant Program will support the implementation of prevention efforts aimed at decreasing risk factors and increasing protective factors for groups at high risk for suicide.

Among North Dakota high school students, 18.8 percent reported they seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months in 2019, compared to 12.4 percent in 2009 (Youth Risk Behavior Survey). Almost a quarter (22.8 percent) of young adult college students in North Dakota reported having suicidal thoughts (2018 North Dakota Student Wellness and Perception Survey North Dakota State University Institutional Report). Additionally, just over five percent of North Dakota adults age eighteen and older had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year (2017-2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health).

The grant funding can be used to implement suicide prevention strategies including planning, awareness, training and/or engagement. The division anticipates awarding up to 19 grants with the \$750,000 available for this effort.

For more information and to apply, visit www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/prevention/suicide. Grant applications must be submitted by March 5 at 4 p.m. Central Time to Moriah Opp at mopp@nd.gov.

"Investing in suicide prevention is essential for our state, including statewide access to behavioral health services," said Pamela Sagness, director of the Behavioral Health Division. "We all can play a role in preventing suicide by learning the possible warning signs and knowing how to respond."

The Behavioral Health Division also recently received a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 9-8-8 state planning grant. The division, in partnership with FirstLink, the state's local National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provider, will develop strategic plans for projected infrastructure needs, volume growth and access to Lifeline's new 9-8-8 number in North Dakota. Vibrant Emotional Health, the nonprofit administrator of Lifeline, has awarded grants to 49 states and territories.

"FirstLink is excited to partner with the state to plan the implementation of the 9-8-8 phone number, which will be live July 2022," said Cindy Miller, FirstLink executive director. "North Dakotans needing support should continue to call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) until then."

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In other efforts to enhance suicide prevention in the state, the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Coalition will be hosting its 4th annual Suicide Prevention Conference on Feb. 24 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Central Time. To register for this virtual event, visit www.ndspc.org.

If someone is struggling emotionally or having a hard time, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, free and confidential support for people in distress as well as prevention and crisis resources. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

The department's Behavioral Health Division provides leadership for the planning, development, and oversight of the state's behavioral health system. The division works with partners within the Department of Human Services and the state behavioral health system to improve access to services, address behavioral health workforce needs, develop policies and ensure quality services are available for those with behavioral health needs. For more information, visit www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is funded by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and administered by Vibrant Emotional Health. Learn more at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

LuWanna Lawrence | 701-328-1892
lklawrence@nd.gov

Heather Steffl | 701-328-4933
hsteffl@nd.gov