

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | May 19, 2021

Human Services' Behavioral Health Division awards funding to 10 organizations for suicide prevention efforts

Gov. Doug Burgum proclamation highlights May as Mental Health Month

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division has awarded suicide prevention grants to 10 organizations throughout the state to implement evidence-based strategies aimed at suicide prevention among at-risk groups.

"First Lady Kathryn and I believe behavioral health is essential to overall health and well-being," said Gov. Doug Burgum. "Ending the stigma around mental illness is a whole-of-community approach because it prevents too many people from seeking support. We urge North Dakotans to talk with family, friends and co-workers about their mental health, because talking about mental health creates an environment that leads to hope and promotes recovery."

According to vital records data, 146 North Dakotans died by suicide in 2020, and nearly 23 percent of young adults in North Dakota reported having suicidal thoughts. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among ages 15 to 34; and five percent of adults reported having serious thoughts of suicide in the past year.

Suicide is preventable, and talking about it leads to hope, increases help-seeking, reduces stigma and promotes recovery.

"Investing in suicide prevention is vital for our state," said Pamela Sagness, director of the department's Behavioral Health Division. "These grants will assist communities in preventing suicides and supporting individuals and families impacted by suicide."

The department awarded just over \$500,000 in grants to these North Dakota organizations to implement suicide prevention strategies:

- Assessment Therapy and Associates, Grand Forks;
- Center-Stanton Public School, Center;
- Central Regional Education Association, Bismarck;
- FirstLink, Fargo;
- Heartview Foundation, Bismarck;
- Rolette County Public Health, Rolla;
- Sacred Pipe Resource Center, Mandan;
- The Kids Therapy Center, Bismarck;
- Upper Missouri District Health Unit, Williston and
- Wells County Public Health, Fessenden.

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The suicide prevention grant program requires applicants to identify evidence-based suicide prevention strategies providing flexibility for unique proposals that address local needs or culture.

Center-Stanton Public School, located in rural Oliver County, will use the grant funding to train all third through 12th grade teachers in a suicide prevention curriculum to increase the school's ability to access resources in a rural setting. The Sacred Pipe Resource Center will implement culturally-relevant suicide prevention strategies, including the development of a Suicide Prevention Community Council and culturally-based media messaging on positive coping.

A total of 32 proposals were submitted for consideration.

May is Mental Health Month in North Dakota. Gov. Burgum's proclamation can be viewed on the [Behavioral Health Division's website](#).

How to get help

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

The Behavioral Health Division is responsible for reviewing and identifying service needs and activities in the state's behavioral health system to ensure health and safety and access to quality services. It establishes quality assurance standards for the licensure of substance use disorder program services and facilities and provides policy leadership in partnership with public and private entities. For more information, visit www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov.

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