



NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Dalrymple Proclaims Suicide Prevention Month in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – Governor Jack Dalrymple has proclaimed September as Suicide Prevention Month in North Dakota.

According to the North Dakota Department of Health, North Dakota ranks eleventh in the nation for its rate of suicide deaths. Suicide was the ninth leading cause of death in 2010 among North Dakotans. In 2010, 103 North Dakotans died as a result of suicide.

Suicide affects everyone, but some groups are at higher risk than others. Suicide rates in North Dakota have risen in the 10- to 24-year-old age group and the older than 65 age group in 2010. Men are four times more likely than women to die from suicide, but women are three times more likely to attempt suicide. Suicide affects people of all ages and races in North Dakota, but suicide rates have typically been higher in the Native American and the military populations as compared to the general population of North Dakota.

“Just as suicide affects all ages and races, anyone can help save a life if they know the warning signs,” said Micki Savelkoul, Suicide Prevention Program director for the Department of Health. “It can be difficult to ask a loved one if they are thinking about suicide, but starting that conversation may save a life. It’s important to realize, however, that not everyone who displays these warning signs or has risk factors will attempt suicide.”

Risk factors for suicide include, but are not limited to:

- Previous suicide attempt(s).
- History of depression or other mental illness.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Family history of suicide or violence.
- Physical illness.
- Feeling alone.

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“People don’t like to talk about suicide, but it’s a real issue we can’t ignore. Unfortunately, someone dies as a result of suicide approximately every four days in North Dakota,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D., M.P.H.T.M. “Understanding is the key to prevention. That’s why it’s important for all of us to recognize the warning signs and reach out to people who are having difficulty coping.”

The warning signs of suicide can include:

- Changes in a person’s mood, diet or sleeping pattern.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family and society.
- Rage or uncontrolled anger.
- Reckless behavior.

Some of the ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide include:

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be nonjudgmental. Don’t debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don’t lecture on the value of life.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don’t dare him or her to do it.
- Don’t act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don’t be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove lethal means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
- Get help from someone specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. Help is available by calling **1.800.273.TALK (8255)**, a free and confidential 24/7 suicide prevention lifeline.

The North Dakota Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention raises funds for scientific research, education and treatment programs, as well as programs to support those who have lost loved ones to suicide. This year, six “Out of the Darkness” Community Walks are scheduled in North Dakota to raise funds for suicide prevention and awareness. The events will be held in Jamestown September 10, Minot September 17, LaMoure County September 18, Fargo/Moorhead September 25, and Bismarck October 2. Walks also are being scheduled for Cooperstown, Devils Lake, Williston, Grand Forks and Valley City. For information about locations and starting times, contact Mary Weiler at afspnd@gmail.com or www.afsp.org.

The North Dakota Department of Health, the North Dakota Department of Human Services, the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, Mental Health America of North Dakota, and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention are partnering with local organizations, tribal agencies, the Veterans Administration, and the North Dakota National Guard to address suicide prevention through the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Coalition.

“This past year the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Coalition has developed specific goals through partnerships and collaboration, said Beth Huseth, Coalition chair. “We worked closely

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with our legislators and the agencies providing mental health services to educate that suicide continues to be a tragedy in our state. Our hope is to build strength in the people of N.D. through our communities. We welcome anyone that would like to be a part of our organization with the ultimate goal of preventing suicide.”

For information about developing local prevention programs or for more information about suicide prevention, contact Micki Savelkoul, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4580. For information about the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Coalition, contact Beth Huseth at 701.341.0756 or bethh@stalouisius.com.

Please note: Proclamation follows.

PROCLAMATION
SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH
SEPTEMBER 2011

WHEREAS, suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States and the third leading cause of death among people ages 15 to 24; and

WHEREAS, in the United States, one person dies by suicide every 15 minutes; and

WHEREAS, suicide is the ninth leading cause of death in North Dakota and is a concern across all age and cultural demographics; and

WHEREAS, agencies and individuals across North Dakota are working to prevent suicide; and

WHEREAS, North Dakotans are encouraged to learn the warning signs of suicide and to get appropriate help for themselves and their family members who are at risk.

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim September 2011, **SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH** in the state of North Dakota.

Jack Dalrymple
Governor

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