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TEXAS URGED TO REACH OUT TO NEIGHBORS ON SEPTEMBER 10, WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

Experts See Increased Risk with High Unemployment

AUSTIN, TX. (Thursday, September 10, 2009) — Mental Health America of Texas announced today that September 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day, a day designed to promote worldwide commitment and action to help prevent suicides.

“I urge all Texans to reach out to your neighbors in this time of increased economic stress,” says Merily Keller, consultant to Mental Health America of Texas and board member of the Texas Suicide Prevention Council. “With the unemployment rate at 9.7 percent, American families are facing extreme stress and challenges which can put them at risk for death by suicide.”

Although 90 percent of those who die by suicide have an underlying mental health condition, many researchers believe that the stress of loss of a job or loss of a home can greatly add to their risk. In fact, the American Association of Suicidology reports that unemployed people are two to four times as likely to kill themselves, and they report that losing a home is also associated with an increased risk to death by suicide.

According to Keller, Texas suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people, the second leading cause of death for college-age students with the highest rates in the elderly and the highest numbers of death in the middle ages.

“In addition, we’ve discovered that since those in the middle ages are also those most adversely affected by job loss, this is a big problem,” said Keller. “Men die by suicide 4 times as often as women which put them at increased risk; recent reports find that men have faced more job loss than women in the current economic downturn.”

President and CEO of Mental Health America of Texas, Lynn Lasky Clark cautions “many Texans face increased risk for death by suicide because of the high number of military families in our state and the increased risk for suicide among the military has grown exponentially,” said Lasky Clark

For family members, friends and neighbors there are some key things you can do to help.

“To help save lives, Clark states, “know the warning signs for suicide risk and the number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-HELP (8255) as well as the hotline number for your local MHMR center. If you notice someone with any of the warning signs, take the time to reach out and find out if they have had thoughts of suicide. If yes, don’t wait, take action now to call 911 if they are in immediate risk or refer to the hotline or local hospital emergency room. Your caring can save a life.”

For more information on suicide prevention in Texas please go to www.TexasSuicidePrevention.org . If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs immediate help, please call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.

Warning Signs for Suicide are in attachment.

Mental Health America of Texas is the state’s leading information, education and advocacy organization.
www.mhatexas.org

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Ten Warning Signs of Suicide

1. Preoccupation with death and dying
2. Drastic changes in behavior or personality
3. A recent severe loss (such as a relationship) or threat of a loss
4. Unexpected preparations for death such as making out a will
5. Giving away prized possessions
6. A previous suicide attempt
7. Uncharacteristic impulsiveness, recklessness, or risk-taking
8. Loss of interest in personal appearance
9. Increased use of alcohol or drugs
10. Sense of hopelessness about the future

What to Do if You Spot the Signs

Question directly. Asking someone directly if they ever think of suicide lets them know that you take the situation seriously and want to help. It may be a real relief to someone to know that it's all right to talk about it openly.

Persuade them to get help and Refer them to appropriate help.

For more information on suicide prevention efforts in Texas, visit the Mental Health Association in Texas at www.mhatexas.org and the Texas Suicide Prevention Council web site at www.TexasSuicidePrevention.org.