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### For Immediate Release

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## Understanding PTSD in Southwest Nebraska

As communities recognize PTSD Awareness Month this June, Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) wants you to know that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can affect anyone — including veterans, first responders, farmers, healthcare workers, and survivors of accidents, abuse, or other traumatic events.

In rural communities across southwest Nebraska, conversations around mental health can sometimes be difficult. Long work hours, isolation, stigma, and limited access to care may prevent people from seeking support. However, PTSD is treatable, and help is available.

“PTSD is not a sign of weakness,” said Paula Wimer, Program Manager at SWNPHD. “Trauma can impact anyone, and seeking help is a key step toward healing. We want people in southwest Nebraska to know they are not alone and support is available.”

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, PTSD is slightly more common among veterans than civilians, and rural veterans often face additional barriers to care. Research also shows rural veterans may experience higher rates of PTSD and suicide risk compared to their urban counterparts. In southwest Nebraska, 2% of all deaths were related to suicide during 2020 to 2022.

PTSD may develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. Symptoms can include:

- Flashbacks or nightmares
- Anxiety or feeling constantly “on edge”
- Difficulty sleeping
- Avoiding certain places or situations
- Mood changes or feelings of isolation
- Trouble concentrating

While PTSD is commonly associated with military service, it can also affect survivors of natural disasters, violence, car accidents, medical or childhood trauma, agricultural accidents, or other stressful experiences. The good news is that treatment works. Counseling, peer support, telehealth services, EMDR and other mental health resources can help people manage symptoms and improve their quality of life.

If you or someone you know may be struggling with PTSD, talk with your healthcare provider or mental health professional. Immediate support is also available by calling or texting 988 Crisis Lifeline. For more information visit [PTSD.gov](https://www.ptsd.gov). To see a list of local resources visit [swhealth.crediblemind.com](https://swhealth.crediblemind.com). Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.