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For Immediate Release

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September is National Suicide Prevention Month

September is National Suicide Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness about suicide and encourage conversations about mental health. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) reminds individuals and families throughout southwest Nebraska that help is available.

“Suicide prevention is something our entire community can be part of,” said Paula Wimer, Program Manager with SWNPHD. “You don’t have to be a mental health professional to make a difference. Sometimes simply asking someone how they are doing, listening without judgment, and helping them connect with support can be an important first step.”

Suicide is a serious public health concern in Nebraska and in rural communities across the state. According to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 297 Nebraska residents died by suicide in 2024. Nebraska’s age-adjusted suicide rate was 15 deaths per 100,000 people in 2024, which remained higher than the national rate of 14 per 100,000.

The issue is also important locally. The Community Health Assessment done by SWNPHD in 2023 found that the suicide rate in southwest Nebraska increased from 11 deaths per 100,000 people during 2011–2016 to 16 deaths per 100,000 during 2016–2020.

Know the Warning Signs

There is no single cause of suicide, and people may show different warning signs. Changes in behavior, withdrawing from family and friends, expressing hopelessness, talking about feeling like a burden, or experiencing a significant loss or life change can be signs that someone may need additional support.

If you are concerned about someone, ask directly how they are doing and whether they are thinking about suicide. Starting the conversation does not put the idea in someone’s head. It can provide an opportunity for someone to talk about what they are experiencing and connect with help.

Help is Available in Southwest Nebraska

If you or someone you know is struggling, there are several ways to get help:

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text **988** for free, confidential support 24/7. You can also access the 988 online chat. Spanish-language support is available by calling 988 and pressing 2 or texting **AYUDA** to 988.

Emergency Help

If someone is in immediate danger or has an immediate medical emergency, call **911** or go to the nearest emergency department.

Region II Human Services

Visit r2hs.com or call their Crisis Response Line at 308-390-4645 for support or immediate help.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department

SWNPHD can help connect community members with local behavioral health resources throughout its nine-county service area. Visit swhealth.crediblemind.com and go to Community Member Resources.

Suicide prevention does not happen only during September. It happens when neighbors check on neighbors, friends listen to friends, families have difficult conversations, and communities make sure people know where to turn for help. “This September, we encourage residents to check in, start the conversation, listen without judgment, and help connect someone to support. A conversation can make a difference,” continued Wimer.

For more information about mental health resources and community programs, visit swhealth.crediblemind.com, talk to your mental health provider, or contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties, making suicide prevention and access to mental health resources an important part of supporting the health and well-being of local communities. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

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