

## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release:  
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### **Youth Substance Use and Suicide Prevention Program Kickoff September 6**

BISMARCK, N.D. – High school and middle school “Sources of Strength Peer Leaders” from across North Dakota and North Dakota’s Tribal Lands are expected to present to over 200 of their Sources of Strength peers and adult educators next week. The Sources of Strength Kickoff will be held at the Bismarck Ramkota on Wednesday, Sept. 6, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. “Student leaders will share their stories of resiliency and hope – explaining how they got through hard times and how they have helped others to do the same,” said Suicide Prevention Director, Alison Traynor. “This will be a day packed full of highly researched and proven activities shown to reduce risk factors for suicide, bullying, and substance use.”

According to the Department of Public Instruction’s 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 30 percent of youth grades 9 through 12 reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for over two or more weeks. The evidence-based program, Sources of Strength trains young people to be peer leaders and to help their peers connect to the supportive mentors, activities, and services they need to get through hard times before the “hard time” turns into a crisis. Peer Leaders learn how to spread messages of hope, help, and strength across their schools and communities using social networks and online social media.

Sources of Strength is funded through the ND Suicide Prevention Program and is free to any North Dakota school, including Tribal schools. Sources of Strength meets the behavioral health professional development mandates for middle and high school educators, and over 30 schools across the state have implemented it. Contact North Dakota’s Sources of Strength Program Coordinator, Cody Sletten at 701.428.2639 for more information.

If you or someone you love is having thoughts of suicide, call 1-800-273-8255 for 24/7 confidential support, answered locally by FirstLink.

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