

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Governor Burgum Proclaims September Suicide Prevention Month**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Governor Doug Burgum has proclaimed September as Suicide Prevention Month in North Dakota. The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) encourages residents to know the warning signs of suicide, offer support for those who have lost loved ones to suicide and participate in one of several educational and awareness opportunities taking place across the state throughout September.

According to a recent report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), North Dakota's suicide rate has increased by 58 percent since 1999; a more rapid increase than any other state. "It remains the second leading cause of death for ages 15 to 35 in North Dakota and working-aged men make up the largest proportion of those who die by suicide in the state," reports Samantha Bruers, area director for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

"Suicide is complex and has many causes. It occurs when stressors and emotional or physical pain exceed one's ability to cope," said Kora Dockter, chair of the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Coalition and mother of a young man who died by suicide in 2014. "But I have hope. If we work together, educate ourselves on best practices and communicate risk when we see it, we can prevent suicide."

Studies have shown that most suicides are preceded by one or more warning sign(s) or concerning changes in behavior. Know the 12 warning signs:

- Feeling like a burden
- Isolation
- Increased anxiety
- Feeling trapped or unbearable pain
- Increased substance use
- Looking for ways to access lethal means
- Increased anger or rage
- Extreme mood swings
- Expressing hopelessness
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Talking or posting about wanting to die
- Making plans for suicide

Any concerning or uncharacteristic change in behavior in a person is a good reason to ask about suicide directly, clearly and without judgement.

**Five steps to help someone at risk:**

1. Ask
2. Keep them safe
3. Be there
4. Help them connect (Dial 1.800.273.TALK (8255) for local crisis support and resources)
5. Follow up

If you are worried about someone you care about and are not sure what to do, dial the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255). The Lifeline is answered in North Dakota by FirstLink, and the services are free and confidential. FirstLink has access to a statewide database of resources, and staff are trained to help with crisis situations. Enter the number in your phone now so you're prepared to help.

**Get Involved:**

Support local families who have lost loved ones to suicide and help raise funds for awareness by joining local *Out of the Darkness* walks. The walks raise funding for scientific research, education and treatment programs, as well as programs to support those who have lost loved ones to suicide. Find the complete list of walk locations at <https://afsp.donordrive.com/>.

For more information on suicide prevention, visit <http://www.ndhealth.gov/suicideprevention> or contact Alison Traynor, NDDoH suicide prevention director, at 701.328.4580 to join the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Coalition.