

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

PROCLAMATION NO. 2022-085

Proclaiming September 2022 as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month in Multnomah County, Oregon.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

- A. Suicide Prevention Awareness Month is lifted up every September to increase awareness that prevention efforts save lives. This year, Multnomah County's Behavioral Health Division will continue leveraging its successful campaign to "Reach Out," utilizing social media, health center lobby screens and other platforms to communicate messages of hope, and tips to help all of us recognize others who would benefit from connection.
- B. The County's longstanding investment in suicide pre- and post-vention services shows us that anyone may be touched by the traumatic impact of suicide or thoughts of suicide - be it through family, friends, or themselves, even an individual in crisis on the street.
- C. Suicide is a public health issue. It disproportionately impacts people of color, specifically Native Americans and Latine communities. The LGBTQI+ community is also at high risk, especially those who identify as transgender; they are nearly 12 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population.
- D. In Oregon, suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for people aged 10-45, with youth ages 14-25 also experiencing violent death through homicide, the 3rd leading cause of death for that cohort. Youth impacted by criminal justice systems, foster care, homelessness, poverty, and abuse have an increased risk of death by suicide in Multnomah County. Housing, economic stressors, health, and relationship issues lead to stressors identified for adults aged 25 through retirement aged and beyond.
- E. Suicide is often the result of an untreated behavioral health condition and 46% of those who die by suicide had a diagnosed condition. As our residents emerge from more than two years of pandemic-related isolation, still worried about variants, racial unrest and continuing systemic racism, job and housing stability, and basic challenges of daily living, we see multiple components interconnected with behavioral health-related crises. Increased crisis calls, the sharp rise in opioid overdoses and methamphetamine related concerns, the emergence of more powerful drugs such as fentanyl, and a steep jump in gun violence tie together in Multnomah County's story.
- F. Compassion fatigue is real; individuals exposed to extended periods of stress become desensitized to what they see around them. People may walk by when they see someone in crisis, inured to others' pain or simply because they don't know how to help.

- G. Despite these challenges, there is hope. Multnomah County has a workforce dedicated to supporting individuals in their healing, facilitating connections, and providing services well before the prospect of suicide is imminent. Community partners and school districts are actively engaged in efforts to prevent suicides and spread effective information about how to help those facing a crisis.
- H. The County's public health approach to suicide prevention addresses the many factors across the lifespan that can contribute to suicidal behavior. We are focused on improving the quality of life in Multnomah County with programs and resources that help families and children gain access to food, healthcare and stable housing, reduce the traumatic impacts of gun violence, and aid those with substance use and other behavioral health disorders find their path toward health and wellness.
- I. Our Behavioral Health Prevention staff offer multiple supports aimed at reducing suicide and thoughts of suicide as well as mitigating other behaviors that often lead to depression and isolation, like gambling disorders. The Get Trained to Help program offers free training for community members on how to provide immediate help and ensure the safety of someone in distress.
- J. The Multnomah County Behavioral Health Call Center is staffed by professionals trained to address immediate crises, assess needs to find the right services, and connect clients to a range of appropriate, available resources. The new national 988 number is an alternative to our Behavioral Health Call Center, offering assessment and crisis counseling, and resource referrals to individuals and family or friends helping those in crisis.
- K. Multnomah County promotes positive actions that can prevent suicide, including behavioral and physical health care that is accessible and effective. We support culturally specific and responsive services that support communities.
- L. We recognize that connection is more important than ever now. It builds resilience and support. Let a friend or family member know you are thinking about them; lead with kindness; make a little extra food to share with a neighbor next door or even someone you haven't met but see near work or home. Let's collectively see the humanity in ourselves and each other, hold compassion for those in crisis and compassion for those unsure how to help others in crisis.
- M. Suicide prevention is everyone's business. Anyone can get trained to help - for free! Go to www.gettrainedtohelp.com to learn how. If you think an individual is at risk for suicide, help is available 24/7 by calling the Multnomah County Behavioral Health Call Center at 403-988-4888 or dial 988 for the national suicide prevention line.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Proclaims:

The month of September 2022 is proclaimed to be Suicide Prevention Awareness Month in Multnomah County, Oregon. All county residents are encouraged to increase awareness of individuals who may be struggling with challenges in their lives and “Reach Out” to connect, even in small ways. There are resources to help you and those around you.

ADOPTED this 22nd day of September, 2022



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Deborah Kafoury, Chair

REVIEWED:
JENNY M. MADKOUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By 

Jenny M. Madkour, County Attorney

SUBMITTED BY: Julie Dodge, BHD Interim Director.