

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

**PROCLAMATION NO. 2024-082**

Proclaiming September 2024 as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month in Multnomah County, Oregon.

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:**

- A. Suicide Prevention Awareness Month is elevated every September to increase awareness that prevention efforts save lives. The international theme for Suicide Prevention Month is “*Changing The Narrative On Suicide*,” and our efforts are infused with this theme in September and every month of the year.
- B. The County’s longstanding investment in suicide pre and postvention services is an acknowledgment that anyone and everyone may be touched by the traumatic impacts of suicide or thoughts of suicide - be it through family, friends, or themselves. It acknowledges suicide impacts our community, and is a public health crisis.
- C. Suicide is an intersectional public health issue. While overall youth suicide rates decreased in our region, suicide rates for youth of color continue to climb in Multnomah County and across our state. The LGBTQIA2S+ 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. Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among people aged 10-24 and the 11th leading cause of death overall in the U.S. 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 and beyond.
- E. Suicide is complex, often with individuals experiencing untreated behavioral health conditions in addition to social, life, economic, and physical stressors. While the social disruption and loss of life due to the COVID-19 pandemic have changed in recent years, residents continue to see impacts from the height of the pandemic, especially the youngest residents who lost years of social engagement during their early developmental years. The fabric of children’s lives drastically shifted, in addition to the ongoing, complex issues that persist, such as continued systemic racism, income and housing instability, climate impacts, and fundamental challenges of daily living. The factors continue to amplify and increase personal stressors and mental health. Our community is experiencing the impact of interconnected behavioral health-related crises evidenced by increased crisis calls, overdose and substance abuse, the impact of fentanyl, and a climb in gun violence, especially among youth.
- 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, accustomed to others' pain, or simply because they don't know how to help. Fear and stigma are real, too, and often interfere with people giving and seeking 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, practical 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, health care, 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. This year, Multnomah County's Health Department will continue and expand our successful social media campaign, uplifting the power of connection, meaning, healing, and hope for those impacted by suicide while speaking to the diversity of our community.
- I. Our Behavioral Health Prevention staff offers 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. Everyday acts of kindness bind us together in community and kindness, allowing empathy to fill the spaces around us. When we truly pause to connect, make space for deep conversation, thoughtfully share a meal, or intentionally reach out to those who need us, we create positive action, and those actions contribute to healing. Sitting in challenging conversations with open hearts and kindness removes the shame and stigma interrupting people from seeking help. 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](http://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:**

September 2024 is proclaimed 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 “Create Hope Through Positive Action.” Even the smallest efforts help create hope, and hope helps prevent suicide. There are resources to help you and those around you.

ADOPTED this 3rd day of October 2024.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

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Jessica Vega Pederson, Chair

REVIEWED:  
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FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By:

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SUBMITTED BY: Heather Mirasol, BHD Director