

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

PROCLAMATION NO. 2023-079

Proclaiming September 2023 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 our successful social media campaign, uplifting the power of connection, meaning, healing, and hope for those impacted by suicide.
- B. The County's longstanding investment in suicide pre- and post-vention services shows us that anyone and everyone may be touched by the traumatic impacts of suicide or thoughts of suicide - be it through family, friends, or themselves,
- 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. 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. Overall, more firearm deaths occur by suicide than homicide across the lifespan. 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 complex, often with individuals experiencing untreated behavioral health conditions, in addition to social, life, economic, and physical stressors. post-pandemic residents continue to see impacts from the disruption to the social fabric of their lives, in addition to the ongoing, complex issues that persist such as continued systemic racism, income and housing instability, climate impacts, 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. Fear and stigma are real too, and often interfere in people giving help 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 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.
- 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. 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 to one another, 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. When we sit in hard conversations with open hearts and kindness, we take away the shame and stigma that interrupt 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 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 2023 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 “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 28th day of September, 2023.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Jessica Vega Pederson, Chair

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

By _____
Jenny M. Madkour, County Attorney

SUBMITTED BY: Heather Mirasol, BHD Interim Director