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Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Receives Federal Grant to Bolster Youth Suicide Prevention Efforts

Activities will enhance statewide and community-level mental health promotion and suicide prevention, intervention and response capacity

(HARTFORD, CT) – The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) today announced that it has been awarded a 5-year, \$3,675,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to enhance statewide and community-level mental health promotion and suicide prevention, intervention and response capacity.

The CT Partnerships for Hope and Healing (PH2) youth suicide prevention grant will be co-directed by DMHAS and the Departments of Children and Families (DCF) and Public Health (DPH), the lead state agencies for suicide prevention. The PH2 grant will utilize comprehensive, equitable, public health approaches and evidence-based practices, frameworks and strategies to address gaps and reduce suicide attempts and deaths among youth age 24 and under. Planned enhancements include a Training Collaborative, Data to Action Dashboard, 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline co-promotion with the state’s 1 WORD, 1 VOICE, 1 LIFE suicide prevention campaign, and the release of Connecticut’s Suicide Prevention Plan 2030. The grant will also fund the development of informed, coordinated, and sustainable partnerships within five prioritized areas across schools, campuses, community organizations and clinical services to ensure at-risk youth are identified, connected to care/treatment, provided with lethal means counseling, safety planning, and follow-up services. The PH2 will promote suicide prevention as a core priority in Connecticut, and will utilize interventions that are data and quality-driven, sustainable, culturally competent and equitable.

“We are grateful that DMHAS has been chosen to receive this federal grant that will help Connecticut expand its robust suicide prevention efforts. Our state has one of the lowest suicide rates in the nation, but even one death is too many,” said DMHAS Commissioner Nancy Navarretta. “In 2022, Connecticut youth aged 10-24 had a higher rate of emergency room visits for suicide attempts or thoughts of suicide than other age groups. Additional resources will help us with enhanced implementation of effective prevention practices; building capacity to help young people feel supported, valued and connected.”

DMHAS, DCF, and DPH, with guidance from the CT Suicide Advisory Board, will co-direct the PH2 and partner with the United Way of CT/211, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provider and statewide mobile crisis call center, for the management and implementation of activities, and UCONN Health for the evaluation. The PH2 will serve an estimated 2,000 annually and 10,000 over five years of diverse youth age 24 and under associated with educational settings, and will train and educate an estimated 1,000 annually and 5,000 over five years of supportive

adults in educational settings, families, juvenile justice systems, substance use and mental health services, child protection and foster care, and other youth and young adult-serving organizations.

"The increase of youth suicide is a reflection of despair. As adults, we must confront the mental health needs of children head on. Through true collaboration, state and community partners across Connecticut have been on the forefront of youth suicide prevention and training. This funding is crucial to expanding our collective work centered on the well-being of the children and families we serve," said DCF Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes.

"The Department of Public Health stands firmly behind the notion that good mental health is essential to overall health. We currently administer the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Comprehensive Suicide Prevention grant and previously served as a co-project director with our colleagues from DMHAS on the Garrett Lee Smith grant to prevent suicide in institutions of higher education," said DPH Commissioner Manisha Juthani, MD. "Youth and young adults are a population who need special attention to help them thrive, and we can accomplish this by giving them a hand to build their resilience and coping skills, encouraging them to recognize and take care of their mental health, and developing healthy relationships with others. These are some of the protective factors that will help them along the way on their journey into adulthood."

In crisis call or text 988, or chat www.988lifeline.org.

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