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Public Health District

News Release

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Talking openly about suicide can save a life **Suicide Prevention Week: September 5-11, 2021**

The COVID pandemic has been exceptionally hard for people's mental well-being including stress, anxiety, depression, and substance misuse. Suicide is a topic that must be brought out of the darkness to save lives.

"Many individuals and workplaces can feel unprepared to help employees who are struggling with suicidal thoughts or to assist others following the death of a coworker by suicide. Thankfully, employers can play a powerful role in preventing suicide and responding appropriately when tragedies occur," Nicole Berosek, MS, Organizational Wellness Coordinator.

Suicide is more common than you might think and affects all ages. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US. It was responsible for more than 47,500 deaths in 2019, which is about one death every 11 minutes. The number of people who think about or attempt suicide is even higher.

Some groups have higher suicide rates than others. Suicide rates vary by race/ethnicity, age, and other factors. The highest rates are among American Indian/ Alaska Native and non-Hispanic White populations. Other Americans with higher-than-average rates of suicide are veterans, people who live in rural areas, and workers in certain industries and occupations like mining and construction. Young people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual have a higher rate of suicidal ideation and behavior compared to their peers who identify as straight.

As employers, your workforce can be directly impacted through the suicide of an employee or their family members or friends.

Tips for Employers:

- **Know the warning signs & intervention steps**
 - Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself.
 - Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun.
 - Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
 - Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.

- **How to intervene at the workplace**
 - Ask how they are doing.
 - Listen without judging.
 - Mention changes you have noticed in the person's behavior and say that you are concerned about their emotional well-being.
 - Suggest that they talk with someone in the employee assistance program (EAP), the human resources department, or another mental health professional. Offer to help arrange an appointment and go with the person.
 - Continue to stay in contact with the person and pay attention to how they are doing.

If in doubt, reach out. It is so important; it might just save a life!

To learn more about the Panhandle Public Health District's (PPHD) suicide prevention efforts, join us for our monthly Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council (PWWC) wellness chat on September 9th @ 2 pm. Dr. Anita Chandra will discuss mental health and disease planning for employees and/or employers. We will also highlight Suicide Prevention Week, along with National Preparedness Month. If you are interested in joining this wellness chat, please contact Nicole Berosek at nberosek@pphd.org or register here: <https://tinyurl.com/4hf9exzd>.

Also, you are invited to register for our Fall Safety and Wellness Conference, October 21st at the Harms Center in Scottsbluff, NE. We have many exciting speakers and interactive sessions to address mental health and resiliency for worksites, don't miss out. To register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/tukbpxkv>.

For additional information about worksite wellness, visit www.pphd.org/pwwc.html or call Berosek at 308-262-2217. The Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is proudly part of Panhandle Public Health District.

The Council specializes in supporting employers in the Panhandle region. We recognize that many employers support a diverse and remote workforce and offer innovative ways to overcome the challenge of working with a virtual team. We understand that many of our employers do not have full-time wellness resources and work to provide resources and training to make running a worksite wellness program as easy as possible.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.