

**For Immediate Release**

Sept. 1, 2015

**Contact: Jasmin Sosa**

916-287-9674

jsosa@rs-e.com

## **MORE CALIFORNIANS PREPARED TO HELP THOSE AT RISK OF SUICIDE**

### ***Progress and Impact of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs Funded by Mental Health Services Act Highlighted During Suicide Prevention Week Sept. 7-13***

(Sacramento, Calif.) – Sept. 7 through 13 marks the 41<sup>st</sup> annual Suicide Prevention Week when the global community unites to spread awareness about the warning signs of suicide and offer support to those who have lost someone to suicide. Results of a recently conducted independent evaluation found that more Californians than ever know the signs of suicide and are prepared to intervene with someone who is struggling thanks to programs supported by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) with funds from the Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63) and that this investment will save lives and dollars.

More than 3,800 Californians die by suicide each year, but that devastating number belies the depth of the problem because for every person who dies, there are many more who think about, plan or attempt suicide. In fact, more than 16,000 people were hospitalized in one year for self-inflicted injuries in the state.<sup>1</sup> Each life lost to suicide also creates a deep and lasting ripple effect within families and communities, leaving behind “suicide loss survivors” that number in the tens of thousands in California.

With funding and support from CalMHSA through the voter-approved Prop. 63, California has made a significant investment in initiatives that are intended to prevent suicides, prevent mental illness, promote mental wellness and connect individuals with help before they reach a crisis point. Resources have been distributed across the state and used in each county to improve the mental health of Californians with strategies that empower everyone with the tools, technologies and crisis support needed to prevent suicide, and independent analysis by RAND Corporation shows that this investment is making a difference.

“Our programs are saving lives,” says Dr. Wayne Clark, executive director of CalMHSA, the joint authority that works on behalf of California’s counties to distribute Prop. 63 funds and oversees Each Mind Matters: California’s Mental Health Movement. “By educating the public about warning signs and local resources, strengthening crisis centers, and funding suicide prevention training programs, CalMHSA’s suicide prevention initiative is positively impacting California now and will for years to come.”

RAND conducted an independent analysis of the CalMHSA programs and concluded:

- **Millions of Californians are now more prepared to help those at risk for suicide.**
  - More than half of Californians were exposed to messaging from Know the Signs, the suicide prevention initiative of Each Mind Matters, and those who had been, reported higher levels of confidence to intervene with someone at risk for suicide.

- **California leads the nation in the number of people trained in suicide intervention skills.**
  - Since 2012, more than 525 Californians have been certified to train others in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and/or safeTALK, and over 9,000 Californians have been trained in ASIST and/or safeTALK.
- **California’s suicide prevention programs are saving lives and dollars.**
  - Just one year of CalMHSA’s funding of the ASIST program is projected to prevent at least 140 deaths and 3,600 suicide attempts over the next three decades.<sup>ii</sup>
  - For every \$1 the state invests in CalMHSA’s suicide prevention program, the state will receive an estimated \$1,100 in economic benefits, such as reduced spending on emergency care and increased earnings.<sup>iii</sup>

Evidence also suggests that many Californians are also reaching out when experiencing crisis. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline reports that nearly 150,000 calls originated in California in 2013 (the most recent year available). Funding provided by CalMHSA to crisis centers contributed to overall strengthening of services and as a result, according to Common Metrics Report 2014-2015, individuals who call an accredited suicide prevention hotline in California have decreased suicidal intent after the call.

Suicide Prevention Week efforts throughout California build on this momentum and underscore that suicide can be prevented, and that everyone has a role to play to support those at risk. County-hosted events throughout the state will promote local resources and the Know the Signs Campaign, which empowers people with information to know the warning signs of suicide, find the words to offer help to someone, and reach out to local resources, such as crisis hotlines and support groups that can provide care. Know the Signs offers English and Spanish-language interactive websites (SuicidelsPreventable.org and EISuicidioEsPrevenible.org) as well as printed materials in English, Spanish, Chinese, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Tagalog, and Vietnamese that can be downloaded or ordered at eachmindmatters.org/shop.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can connect you to a trained crisis counselor at your nearest crisis center, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more information on the suicide prevention efforts underway in California and to get involved, visit [www.eachmindmatters.org](http://www.eachmindmatters.org), [www.suicideispreventable.org](http://www.suicideispreventable.org), [www.elsuicidiesprevenible.org](http://www.elsuicidiesprevenible.org)

###

---

<sup>i</sup> California Department of Public Health, Safe and Active Communities Branch. Report generated from <http://epicenter.cdph.ca.gov> on: August 8, 2012

<sup>ii</sup> Ashwood, J., B. Briscoombe, R. Ramchand, E. May, and M. Audrey Burnam, “Analysis of the Benefits and Costs of CalMHSA’s Investment in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST),” May 2015.

[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1100/RR1115/RAND\\_RR1115.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1100/RR1115/RAND_RR1115.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.