

NEWS RELEASE

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Join the Conversation: Panhandle Unites for Suicide Prevention and Support This September

As September approaches, Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) and the Panhandle Prevention Coalition (PPC) are steadfastly preparing to observe Suicide Prevention Month with a range of impactful initiatives aimed at raising awareness, providing support, and ultimately saving lives in the community. Every year, the Lifeline and other mental health organizations and individuals across the U.S. and around the world raise awareness of suicide prevention during September to reduce stigma around suicide, a difficult topic to think and talk about. That's why we use this month to spread hope and share important information and resources with Panhandle residents, and especially anyone affected by the tragedy of suicide. Our goal is to ensure that everyone living in the Panhandle has access to the tools, resources, and information needed to have conversations about preventing suicide and to feel comfortable seeking help if needed.

With over 49,000 lives lost to suicide annually in the US, urgent efforts are essential. Disproportionately impacting young adults, veterans, and those facing mental health disparities, the need for comprehensive action is clear. PPHD and the PPC are at the forefront, offering vital prevention and support resources.

QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training teaches us how to recognize signs that someone might be thinking of suicide. You'll learn how to have the conversation that can save a life. Available, monthly and on request, QPR Training is a cornerstone of their efforts. Our goal is to ensure that everyone living in the Panhandle has the tools to have the essential conversation with someone in crisis and knows what to do to refer to help.



The next monthly QPR webinar training is Wednesday, September 11 at noon. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8kb837> Or contact Cheri Farris at 308-220-8020 or cfarris@pphd.ne.gov to schedule a webinar or in-person training for your group or organization. Please join us for the upcoming QPR webinar! Register here using the QR code

Hope Squad, a school-based, trained peer-to-peer student support network, helps move prevention even further upstream, targeting some of the most vulnerable populations. Hope Squads are in many Panhandle area schools. Contact us to learn more.

Youth Mental Health First Aid initiative contributes significantly to suicide prevention, enhancing community participation in the fight against suicide.

Last fall, the PPC introduced a Suicide Loss Survivors' Support Group, offering a safe space for those who have lost loved ones to find solace, understanding, and healing.

Credible Mind, a leading provider of vetted digital mental health resources, has collaborated with PPHD. CredibleMind is a leading digital platform designed to enhance mental health and wellbeing for individuals aged 13 and up, offering a wide range of expert-vetted resources, tools, and apps. With specialized content for teens, college students, and adults, CredibleMind provides tailored support to help manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. The platform also includes resources for younger children, encouraging parents to guide and supervise their use to ensure a safe and supportive experience. CredibleMind empowers users to take charge of their mental health journey, fostering resilience and wellbeing across all age groups from self-care supports and beyond. For more information please reach out to tprochazka@pphd.ne.gov

988 National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. It's now easier to remember the three-digit number 988. #BeThe1To is the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline's message for National Suicide Prevention Month and beyond, which helps spread the word about actions we can all take to prevent suicide. The Lifeline network and its partners are working to change the conversation from suicide-to-suicide prevention with actions that can promote healing, help, and hope.

Contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline if you are experiencing mental health-related distress or are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

- Call or text 988
- Chat at 988lifeline.org

Connect with a trained crisis counselor. 988 is confidential, free, and available 24/7/365. Visit the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline for more information at 988lifeline.org. Veterans can also dial 988 and press 1 to be connected to a specially trained responder.

Preventing suicide is up to all of us, and together we can save lives. By fostering an environment of compassion, awareness, and open dialogue, PPHD and the PPC are working tirelessly to create a community where every individual feels valued and supported together with schools, healthcare organizations, and other partners across the area.

For more information, resources, or to participate in the upcoming events, please reach out to Together, we can make a difference.

Suicide Loss Support Groups. Support groups are available at this time in Scottsbluff in-person and virtually Panhandle-wide. Everything shared within the group setting is confidential, and the facilitators have lost someone to suicide, too, so they know the pain, questions, and complexity of losing a loved one to suicide. They are there to support others along the journey with empathy and nonjudgment. If you'd like more information or support following a suicide loss, please reach out to Liz Imacdonald@pphd.ne.gov or Susan sywhit63@gmail.com.

Suicide Prevention Month Events around the Panhandle this September include:

Suicide Prevention Community Walks All funds donated to the Garden County and Alliance Suicide Prevention Community Walk will go towards holding the annual walk as well as supporting evidence-based, suicide prevention programs in Alliance, Oshkosh, and throughout the Panhandle including Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR) and Hope Squad. These efforts are coordinated by PPHD and the PPC.

- 9/11/2024 Region 1 Behavioral Health Authority Walk for Hope at noon encourages Panhandle residents to wear teal or purple and walk at lunch to support suicide awareness. Contact kfries@region1bhs.net or steal@region1bhs.net for more information.
- 9/13/2024 at 7 p.m. Hope Walks Here community walk event at Garden County High School Track. Contact cfarris@pphd.ne.gov for more information
- 9/28/2024 at 10 a.m. Alliance Suicide Prevention Community Walk at the Performing Arts Center. Registration at 9:30. Walk begins at 10:00 a.m. Contact jvisseer@pphd.ne.gov for more information
- 10/6/2024 at 1:30 p.m. AFSP Walk in Scottsbluff at Scottsbluff YMCA Trails West Camp. Contact sywhit63@gmail.com or gmanley@afsp.org for more information

If you are interested in donating to help save a life and support the evidence-based, suicide prevention programs in the panhandle, you may contact Janelle Visser at 308-760-6493.

Please consider joining suicide prevention activities near you and taking the one-hour QPR Training. Together we can do more to stop suicide. For more information or to get involved, contact Cheri Farris at 308-220-8020 or cfarris@pphd.ne.gov

The Panhandle Prevention Coalition also supports other prevention efforts. For more information, please reach out to Liz MacDonald at Imacdonald@pphd.ne.gov or 308-633-2866 Ext. 204

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