



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

An Agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

SAMHSA **News Release**

Embargoed for Release
12:01 a.m., Weds., Sept. 10, 2008

Contact: SAMHSA Press Office, 240-276-2130
www.samhsa.gov

More Americans Than Ever Turn to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Network Hotline (1 800-273-TALK) for Help with Suicide-Related Problems

Innovative support programs offer hope to an average of 43,000 people a month in crisis.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) has become the nation's leading source of immediate help for those dealing with suicide-related issues, according to new figures from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

SAMHSA announced that the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Lifeline) received nearly 500,000 calls in the past year from people seeking help for themselves or someone for whom they cared. The Lifeline is operated by SAMHSA's grantee Link2Health Solutions, Inc., under a cooperative agreement. The Lifeline was established in 2001 to provide a system of immediate, round-the-clock, reliable, skilled assistance to everyone struggling with suicide issues.

The announcement was made during National Suicide Prevention Week, Sept. 7-13. The week focuses public attention on the devastating nationwide impact of suicide and highlights ways to prevent suicide.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicides accounted for an estimated 32,637 deaths in the United States in 2005, the latest year for which data are available.

Each year, nearly twice as many people in the U.S. die from suicide than by homicide. The American Association for Suicidology estimates that each suicide directly affects at least six other people – one in every 65 Americans.

SAMHSA and other mental health groups are using National Suicide Prevention Week to encourage people in crisis and those who are concerned about someone possibly at risk for suicide to use the Lifeline and the many lifesaving services it offers.

Using state of the art technology and a network of 135 crisis centers across the country, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can immediately link a caller seeking help to a trained counselor closest to the caller's geographic location – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Calls to the Lifeline and the counseling services provided are confidential.

“The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is meeting an urgent public health need and provides a trusted source of help for those who desperately need it,” said SAMHSA Acting Administrator Eric Broderick.

In a further effort to reach out a broader range of people, especially younger people, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.) recently arranged to establish sites within the MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube social networks where people can access information and help(www.myspace.com/800273TALK; www.facebook.com/pages/National-Suicide-Prevention-Lifeline-1-800-273-TALK/11261740684; www.youtube.com/800273TALK.) Additionally, users who mention “suicide” in their postings to Help.com receive an automatic response from Lifeline urging them to call 1-800-273-TALK.

This summer the Lifeline introduced an online site, Lifeline Gallery: Stories of Hope and Recovery, (www.lifeline-gallery.org). Developed through a donation to the grantee by Academy Award winning producer James L. Brooks, the Lifeline Gallery is an interactive web site uses animated avatars to raise awareness about the effects of suicide. The Gallery provides a safe place for the survivors of people who have died through suicide, suicide attempt survivors, and those in the suicide prevention field to share their stories of hope and recovery through computer generated avatars. The web site offers those seeking help contacts to a wide variety of suicide prevention resources – including 1-800-273-TALK.

Other outreach programs include the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline. Developed in cooperation with the Department of Veterans Affairs this system allows veterans and their loved ones immediate access through 1-800-273-TALK to a specialized veterans call center and to more than 150 Suicide Prevention Coordinators at local VA Medical Centers across the country. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline also provides help to members of the Spanish-speaking community through a sub-network of crisis centers with Spanish language capacity.

Further information on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and other SAMHSA suicide prevention grant programs can be obtained by visiting SAMHSA’s website <http://www.samhsa.gov/>.

SAMHSA is a public health agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The agency is responsible for improving the accountability, capacity and effectiveness of the nation’s substance abuse prevention, addictions treatment and mental health services delivery systems.

###