



Media Contact:

Jeremy Willinger

(212) 614-6317 (weekdays) / (917) 549-1230 (weekends)

jwillinger@mhaofnyc.org

Experts Available to Discuss Mental Health Policy, Firearm Violence and Suicide Prevention

NEW YORK, NY – December 26, 2012 – The debate over gun control has been reintroduced into the national dialogue after the tragic events at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown Connecticut.

While this is a needed conversation, there has been much misinformation concerning people with mental illness as well as the history of mental health policy in the United States. The NRA is calling for a national database of people with mental illness, for example, while others employ stigmatizing language to characterize the 1 in 5 Americans with mental health challenges.

The Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC) has a range of experts on staff to help contextualize and explain the history of mental health policy efforts, and how this issue factors into the ongoing debate over gun violence. Further, MHA-NYC can provide information regarding access to firearms and suicide prevention.

Experts on staff include:

- **Kimberly A. Williams, L.M.S.W.**, Director of the Center for Policy, Advocacy, and Education of the Mental Health Association of New York City
- **John Draper, Ph.D.**, Director of the federally-funded National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Network
- **Christian Burgess, L.M.S.W.**, Director of the national Disaster Distress Helpline

MHA-NYC and its subsidiary Link2Health Solutions, Inc., also provide a range of innovative resources to help people experiencing emotional distress as a result of human-caused and natural disasters. For those in New York City, LifeNet (800-LIFENET), the city's only accredited, multi-lingual, multi-cultural crisis hotline is available 24/7.

Link2Health Solutions Inc. administers the national Disaster Distress Helpline, accessible by calling 800-985-5990 or texting 'TalkWithUs' to 66746 (Spanish-speakers can text 'Hablamos' to 66746), as well as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-TALK). Both crisis hotlines are funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Each service is designed to help people find the resources, information, and crisis counseling needed to move forward and learn how to cope with the emotional distress that can accompany a tragedy like that of Sandy Hook.

#

The Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC) is a not for profit organization that addresses mental health needs in New York City and across the nation. It is a local organization with national impact and has a three-part mission of services, advocacy and education. After the events of 9-11, LifeNet became a central service in the largest federally-funded disaster mental health response in the nation's history, "Project Liberty." LifeNet was also called upon by the American Red Cross to assist in their Mental Health Recovery Program post-9/11 and again in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast. For over 40 years, MHA-NYC has offered innovative and culturally sensitive services that promote the importance of mental wellness. www.mha-nyc.org

Link2Health Solutions, Inc. (L2HS), a subsidiary of the Mental Health Association of New York City, is a leading innovator and developer of technology and communications infrastructure critical for supporting the emotional well-being of individuals and communities in need. Through its service networks and agency partnerships, L2HS administers high-quality programs that reach over a million people every year throughout the country. www.l2hs.org