

Press Releases

02-02-11 OC Exec Diana Reminds Us that Friends can Help Friends

Free Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Resources Available in Orange County

Tragically, several Orange County communities have been affected by youth suicide and suicide attempts in recent months. So that others may be spared the heartache of similar tragedy, Orange County Executive Edward A. Diana and Orange County Commissioner of Mental Health, Chris Ashman, urge County residents to be aware of the many suicide prevention resources available in our community.

Speaking directly to the youth of our community, Orange County Executive Diana said, "If you or someone you know is feeling depressed, hopeless, sad, or lonely, there's no need to deal with it alone. Be alert to the warning signs, offer a helping hand, and reach out to the many excellent, free resources that are available."

In Orange County, there are a number of easily accessible phone numbers that can connect those in need with help, support, and direction quickly and easily.

- **HELPLINE – 1-800-832-1200** – This 24/7 hotline, offered by the Mental Health Association in Orange County, provides crisis intervention, information, emotional support, and referrals.
- **Dial 2-1-1** – A free, confidential, multi-lingual, health and human services information and referral telephone service.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK (8255).**
This free and confidential 24-hour hotline is available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

Commissioner Ashman recommends that these numbers be entered into one's cell phone or posted on the refrigerator at home or locker in school. "Taking action can save a life, so it's important to be aware of the suicide warning signs – for you or someone you know – and seek help as quickly as possible if any of the signs are identified," says Commissioner Ashman.

Warning signs may include:

- Thinking, talking about, or planning to hurt or kill oneself.
- Seeking to kill oneself by obtaining or having access to firearms, pills, or other means.
- Talking about things that are out of the ordinary for that individual, including dying, death, or suicide.
- Feeling angry, vengeful, and having uncontrolled anger.
- Engaging in reckless and risky behavior without thought for the consequences.
- Feeling like there's no way out.
- Using drugs and alcohol excessively.
- Isolating oneself from friends, family, and the world.
- Sleeping a lot, worrying a lot, or having trouble sleeping, or feeling irritable.
- Having dramatic mood changes.
- Experiencing important losses or a relationship break-up.
- Feeling worthless or hopeless.
- Giving away of prized possessions.

Young people should be encouraged to turn to a trusted adult if they, or someone they know, are experiencing any of these warning signs.

"It's critical that our young people remember that by turning to an adult or another resource, they are not betraying a friend, but potentially saving a life," says Mr. Diana.

For online information, Suicide Prevention Center of New York State offers a comprehensive website at www.preventsuicideNY.org. The Orange County Department of Mental Health can be reached at 291-2600 or www.orangecountygov.com, click on County Departments, then Mental Health.