**Working Together to Prevent Suicide**

Suicide Prevention Week is Sept. 9 – 15, 2018. During this week individuals and organizations around the country join their voices to broadcast the message that suicide can be prevented, and to reach as many people as possible with the tools and resources to support themselves and those around them. This year’s theme is “Working Together to Prevent Suicide.”

Approximately 70% of suicides are among working age adults. Working age adults are the sandwich generation. They are so busy taking care of children and often aging parents and relatives, that taking time for themselves is a luxury few feel they can afford. Concerns about finances, marital and family problems, and simple exhaustion can feel overwhelming.

It can be a challenge to reach working age adults. Where they live, recreate, and work vary widely. However, most will spend a significant portion of their day at work. The workplace offers an excellent opportunity to offer a lifeline to those in distress.

Consider your own workplace. If you were in a crisis would you know where to turn? Is your workplace supportive when employees are experiencing emotional health challenges? What resources are available to support you and your coworkers? The good news is that **suicide can be prevented.** Many people who feel suicidal don’t want to die, they want to end their pain and keep from being a burden to others. People who find themselves in a suicide crisis can and do recover. Sometimes support with life problems can help turn the tide.

The following actions can help:

**Create a supportive environment wherever you work, live and play.** Supportive environments make healthy choices easier. The following steps are geared toward workplaces, but they can broadcast a message of help and hope in any environment.

**Know the Signs:** Most people who are considering suicide show some warning signs or signals of their intentions. You may have noticed that a coworker or a friend has been frequently late to work or missed more days than usual or hasn’t been able to keep up with their daily routine. There may be more going on under the surface. They may be experiencing mental health or substance abuse issues, having financial problems, going through a divorce, or coping with illness in the family. They may feel hopeless, that there is no way out from their problems, and fear that they may lose their job, their house, or disappoint their family.

* Learn to recognize the warning signs of suicide by visiting the Know the Signs website [www.suicideispreventable.org](http://www.suicideispreventable.org) .

**Find the Words:** Check in with the people around you, especially if you notice that something may be wrong, or their behavior has changed. Avoid rushing to judgement and instead find a time to have a real conversation with them. Lead with open ended questions. Let them know you are available to listen and to help. Ask them directly if they are thinking about suicide. This can be difficult to do, but being direct provides an opportunity for them to open up and talk about their distress and will not suggest the idea to them if they aren’t already thinking about it.

* The “Find the Words” section of the Know the Signs website [www.suicideispreventable.org](http://www.suicideispreventable.org) suggests ways to start the conversation.

**Reach Out:** You are not alone in this. Before having the conversation, become familiar with some resources to offer to the person you are concerned about. Have resources available to refer them to.

* Visit the Reach Out section of the Know the Signs resources page to find California statewide and local resources in your county: [www.suicideispreventable.org](http://www.suicideispreventable.org)
* If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, help is available 24/7 by calling the Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255- TALK). The Lifeline offers free and confidential assistance from trained counselors in your area. The Lifeline is also available in Spanish, and for veterans or for those concerned about a veteran, by selecting a prompt to be connected to counselors specifically trained to support veterans.

Hang posters and keep a supply of brochures handy that convey the message that help is available. Materials are available for free download by visiting the Each Mind Matters Resource Center <https://emmresourcecenter.org> . Make sure everyone knows their options by compiling a listing of resources in your area, such as counseling, support groups, and programs that help with life problems such as legal support, family services, and debt counseling. Disseminate the list widely and post it on any websites that are commonly visited.

OPTION 1: end here, no customization

OPTION 2: customize to include more information local programs and initiatives. This section will be more powerful if you include with a short description of what is offered, and a story from someone who used the service successfully.

**Add Your Voice to World Suicide Prevention Day**

Sept. 10, 2018 is World Suicide Prevention Day. This is an opportunity to join millions of others around the globe to focus public attention on preventing suicide through diverse activities to promote understanding about suicide and highlight effective prevention activities. Find out more about joining this collective call to action by visiting [www.iasp.info/wspd/](http://www.iasp.info/wspd/).

The Know the Signs campaign is one of several statewide initiatives funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63). These efforts are administered by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) and are part of Each Mind Matters: California’s Mental Health Movement.