

Adam Crum
Commissioner

health.alaska.gov



Department of Health

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Clinton Bennett, DOH, 907-269-4996, clinton.bennett@alaska.gov

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September 7, 2022, ANCHORAGE – September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month – a time for mental health advocates, prevention organizations, survivors, allies and community members to unite to promote suicide prevention awareness.

This year, the Alaska Department of Health (DOH) and our suicide prevention partners will be celebrating and raising awareness of 988, the new, easy-to-remember dialing code that connects people experiencing thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance abuse crisis and/or emotional distress with highly trained and compassionate call center professionals through the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#).

The department is also pleased to announce that the Division of Behavioral Health has been awarded the federal Garrett Lee Smith State/Tribal Youth Suicide Prevention and Early Intervention grant providing \$3.6 million over the next five years. The grant, “Strengthening Pathways to Care for Alaska’s Youth,” is aimed at preventing suicide and suicide attempts among Alaska’s youth and young adults, ages 10-24. Suicide is a leading cause of death for younger Alaskans.

A growing number of people of all ages nationwide and in Alaska are experiencing mental health challenges for multiple reasons, including the COVID-19 pandemic. The good news, however, is that more people than ever are reaching out for help. Since July 1, when the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline transitioned to 988, Alaska has observed a 22% increase in call volume. Careline is the Lifeline member in Alaska that answers 988 calls.

Some Alaska activities for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and Suicide Prevention Week include:

- **Governor Mike Dunleavy** has issued a [proclamation](#) pronouncing Sept. 4-10 Suicide Prevention Week in Alaska.
- **The Alaska chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** is hosting the [Out of Darkness Anchorage Walk](#) at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 10, at Cuddy Family Midtown Park. The event unites our communities and provides an opportunity to acknowledge the ways in which suicide and mental health conditions have affected our lives and the lives of those we love and

care about. Media members are encouraged to attend. Please contact Dustin Morris at dmorris@afsp.org.

- **The Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition**, along with partner organizations, is inviting community members to come together from 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 10, at Sandy Beach in Juneau for International Suicide Prevention and Awareness Day. The event includes a community BBQ and canoe-healing journeys for suicide loss and attempt survivors. Learn more about this event and other Juneau events [here](#).
- **The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)** is inviting all Alaskans during September to join in wellness activities that focus on self-care, creating connections to improve your overall mental health, and how to help yourself and others who may be having thoughts of suicide and experiencing a mental health crisis. After completing the activities, participants are invited to complete a survey for a chance to win a \$100 Visa gift card. Look for weekly posts from ANTHC's [Facebook](#) page and [Instagram](#), and visit [ANTHC's webpage](#) in September to participate.
- **The Statewide Suicide Prevention Council** is now accepting feedback on the five-year Statewide Suicide Prevention Plan update. Please take the survey [here](#).

To learn more about the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in Alaska, visit 988.alaska.gov. At this site you can find videos, fact sheets and other resources about 988 in Alaska, as well as information about suicide warning signs and suicide prevention resources.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, call or text 988, or chat [988Lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org). You can also contact the Alaska Careline at 877-266-HELP.

Media availability planned for Thursday, Sept. 8

Reporters interested in learning more about the 988 rollout and suicide prevention in Alaska are invited to attend a press availability from 2 - 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 8. If you are a member of the media and interested in attending, please email clinton.bennett@alaska.gov for the Zoom link.

Speakers will include representatives from DOH, the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, the Alaska Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and Alaska's Careline.

#