

**Bill Hogan**

Commissioner

P.O. Box 110601

Juneau, AK 99811-0601

[www.hss.state.ak.us](http://www.hss.state.ak.us)



## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jan. 8, 2010

Contact: Sarana Schell, (907) 269-8041, Cell (907) 398-1480, [sarana.schell@alaska.gov](mailto:sarana.schell@alaska.gov)  
Greg Wilkinson, (907) 269-7285, Cell (907) 382-7032, [gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov](mailto:gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov)

### **State, stakeholders hold Statewide Suicide Prevention Summit Jan. 11-13**

*Goal is to identify gaps, ways to strengthen existing network of prevention programs*

(Anchorage, AK) — A three-day statewide suicide prevention summit next week in Anchorage aims to identify gaps in the suicide prevention network and ways to fix them. Concerned citizens and involved agencies from around the state will work together at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium in Anchorage, under the summit theme, "Your Life Has Value to Me."

"We have many quality prevention services and programs in place now, but with one of the highest suicide rates in the nation, we need to do more," said Kate Burkhart, executive director of the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the Alaska Mental Health Board. "Over the course of the summit, we'll identify concrete, immediate steps that can be taken at a personal, local and state level to begin to better address our shared challenge of suicide prevention."

The summit co-hosts are the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, in partnership with the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB), the Division of Behavioral Health, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and the Alaska Commission on Aging. The Behavioral Health Division, ABADA, AMHB and Commission on Aging are part of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

Participants include regional representatives from around the state: private, public, tribal and education agencies and organizations; clergy and family survivors of suicide.

Alaska's overall suicide rate is 22 suicides per 100,000 residents, accounting for two-thirds of all violent deaths. Regional rates vary widely; the rate in the Northwest Arctic Borough was five times that in Southeast between 1998 and 2007. The needs surrounding suicide prevention are complex, and special attention will be paid to high risk populations including seniors, youth, veterans and Native Alaskans.

"We're excited the Summit will help us find the strengths and gaps in our safety net so we can make it as strong and stable as possible," said Brenda Moore, Statewide Suicide Prevention Council chairperson.

For more information, call Kate Burkhart at (907) 465-8920.

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