

News Release

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Recognizing Day of Hope on Thursday, February 17 to raise awareness about suicide prevention and mental health

As we approach the Day of Hope on February 17, knowing more about mental health can help. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health.

Individuals needing assistance with mental health may be resistant. This hesitancy is due to different reasons with a big one being stigma. Stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a unique characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people who have a mental health condition are common.

Some of the harmful effects of stigma can include:

- Reluctance to seek help or treatment
- Lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers or others
- Fewer opportunities for work, school or social activities or trouble finding housing
- Bullying, physical violence or harassment
- Health insurance that doesn't adequately cover your mental illness treatment
- The belief that you'll never succeed at certain challenges or that you can't improve your situation

Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) recognizes the need to address mental health and stigma. Several PPHD programs such as Hope Squad, QPR, Suicide Awareness Walks, and first responder mental health trainings are just a few opportunities to learn more regarding mental health, suicide prevention, and stigma.

Hope Squad is a peer-to-peer suicide prevention program that works to reduce suicide through public awareness and education. The goal of Hope Squad is to destigmatize mental health issues so young people feel more comfortable asking for help in times of need. The Panhandle has seven schools participating in the Hope Squad program. This program is a great way to address suicide in the school.

QPR, like CPR, can be a lifesaver. QPR training helps participants recognize the warning signs and risk factors for suicide. QPR empowers people of all ages, stages, and backgrounds with the tools and skills to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know. It is an innovative, practical, and proven suicide prevention training.

Finally, each September during suicide prevention awareness month, communities across the Panhandle host Suicide Awareness Walks in Chadron, Alliance, Scottsbluff, and Sidney.

"Mental health in the workplace and communities need to be addressed. Every individual, worksite, and school have different needs but knowing the resources in the Panhandle is a great first step. Seeking opportunities like Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) or employee trainings is an easy way to start addressing mental health. Please reach out if your organization or school is interested in learning more regarding mental health and suicide prevention, we are here to help," shared Nicole Berosek, Organizational Wellness Coordinator.

Please reach out if you and/or your organization or school are interested in learning more regarding the PPHD educational opportunities and resources. Also, to access a list of mental health providers in the Panhandle, check out the Panhandle Partnership directory here: <https://panhandlepartnership.com/directory/> or download the additional resource document included.

For additional information visit www.pphd.org or call Nicole Berosek at 308-279-3496.

Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is proudly part of Panhandle Public Health District. The Council specializes in supporting employers in the Panhandle region. We recognize that many employers support a diverse and remote workforce and offer innovative ways to overcome the challenge of working with a virtual team. We understand that many of our employers do not have full-time wellness resources and work to provide resources and training to make running a worksite wellness program as easy as possible.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.

Sources: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/in-depth/mental-health/art-20046477>; <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm#:~:text=Mental%20health%20includes%20our%20emotional,childhood%20and%20adolescence%20through%20adulthood>.