



AMERICAN MENTAL WELLNESS ASSOCIATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMERICAN MENTAL WELLNESS ASSOCIATION SAYS ZERO SUICIDE INITIATIVE BEST MODEL FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

“Suicide is stage four crisis,” Sharon Engdahl, Executive Director of the American Mental Wellness Association explains. “The truth is it’s easier to prevent suicide when the focus is placed on stage one, which is the beginning of a mental health problem developing. This is no different than for prevention of death from cancer, lung disease, or heart disease. Yet, with mental health problems the approach is to wait until the person has suicidal thoughts and then try to prevent them from dying. This is outrageous!”

The American Mental Wellness Association endorses the Zero Suicide Initiative because of its focus on stage one. Zero Suicide is a commitment to suicide prevention in health and behavioral health care systems utilizing a specific set of strategies and tools, according to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center. The Zero Suicide Initiative works to bring system-wide change that shifts the strategy to proactive preventative measures as opposed to the reactive attitudes often seen in suicide prevention efforts today. The approach is aptly named after the ultimate ideal: no deaths by suicide.

“Over the past 40 years, millions of dollars have been spent on suicide prevention programs that focus on the 4th stage of a person’s mental illness and the suicide numbers have increased.” says Engdahl. “Clearly, we need to change focus. Prevention, early intervention, scientific research, and cures for mental health problems, the mantra of the American Mental Wellness Association, are proven strategies to reduce unnecessary suffering and loss through self-harm.

National Suicide Prevention Week is September 10th through the 16th, and International Suicide Prevention Day takes place on September 10th. The AMWA is hoping organizations both around the nation and around the world take notice to their endorsement of Zero Suicide. They believe it is the wise and ethical way to proceed to successfully prevent suicide.

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Sharon Engdahl, B.So. Sc.

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Our Vision –

We envision a world that through public education values prevention, early intervention, scientific research, and cures of mental health problems for the holistic health of the individual and society.

Our Mission –

We are building healthier lives free of mental

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“The medical community knows the best way to treat a condition is to prevent it from developing into a medical problem. Mental health problems are medical conditions and deserve the same approach as other medical problems. Science has proven prevention and early intervention of mental health problems work. If we do not shift gears to stage one intervention, then we continue fighting a losing battle.” Engdahl affirmed.

Earlier this year, The Atlantic published an article, *A World Without Suicide*, which caught the attention of the American Mental Wellness Association. In the article by Simon Usborne, the Zero Suicide approach is described as “a proactive strategy that aims to identify and care for all those who may be at risk of suicide, rather than reacting once patients have reached crisis point. It emphasizes strong leadership, improved training, better patient screening and the use of the latest data and research to make changes without fear or delay.” “Steve Mallen, a father who lost his son Edward to suicide in 2015 stated, “Even if you believe we are never going to eradicate suicide, we must strive toward that. If zero isn’t the right target, then what is?”

Engdahl stated, “Zero Suicide is exactly what the American Mental Wellness Association stands for. This is precisely what we need to see implemented immediately in our society.”

More information regarding the American Mental Wellness Association, as well as how you can join forces as a “Champion for Prevention, Early Intervention, Scientific Research, and Cures of mental health problems” can be found at www.AmericanMentalWellness.org. For more information on Zero Suicide see www.zerosuicide.sprc.org .

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