



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Ceremony to focus attention on suicide prevention "There is Hope! There is Help!"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Dollie Hambrick
334-206-5664
dhambrick@adph.state.al.us

John Ziegler
(334) 242-3417
john.ziegler@mh.alabama.gov

Suicide remains one of the most tragic events a family and community can experience. In 2002 suicide was the eleventh leading cause of death in Alabama and the third leading cause of death for Alabamians age 15 to 24, according to the Center for Health Statistics of the Alabama Department of Public Health.

The scope of the problem is evidenced by the fact that in Alabama more people die of suicide than homicide every year. A recent survey found that 8 percent of youth in Alabama reported attempting suicide while another 12 percent had made plans to commit suicide. Suicide is also a growing problem among our elderly. Persons over 65 make up 13 percent of Alabama's population, but comprise 18 percent of all suicides.

Alabama has established a Suicide Prevention Task Force dedicated to educating the community about the warning signs of suicide, reducing the rate of suicide in our state and eliminating the stigma of suicide. Gov. Bob Riley has proclaimed the week of September 5-11 as Suicide Prevention Awareness Week in Alabama to further these goals.

Gov. Riley said, "Suicide is among the most tragic events that could ever happen to a family or a community, yet many are unaware of suicide's toll and impact. By increasing public awareness and educating individuals about the warning signs of suicide, we can ultimately reduce the rate of suicide in our state."

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson added that Alabama is ranked fifteenth in the nation in the rate of deaths from suicides. "The report of former Surgeon General David Satcher calls on us to broaden public awareness of suicide and its risk factors, and to intervene to combat this significant public health problem."

Commissioner Kathy Sawyer of the Department of Mental Health/Mental Retardation stated, "Although not everyone who commits suicide has a mental illness, it is alarming to note that more than 90 percent of suicide victims have a serious or profound, persistent depression. Untreated depression is hazardous, particularly when mixed with substance abuse. It's time for this to stop."

The Suicide Prevention Task Force has developed an Alabama Suicide Prevention Plan to encourage suicide prevention efforts to the maximum extent possible. Copies of the printed Alabama Suicide Prevention Plan will be made available at the ceremony. The plan can also be

accessed through the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at www.adph.org/suicideprevention.

The national Suicide Prevention hotline number is 1-800-SUICIDE, (1-800-784-2433). This toll-free line is answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Other information is available at the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Web site at www.mh.state.al.us.

9/7/04