



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama recognizes National Survivors Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In Alabama, more than 500 lives are lost to suicide each year leaving 3,000 family members and friends to deal with the stress of their loss. Nationally, the numbers are even greater, with more than 30,000 suicide deaths each year and at least 180,000 family members and friends affected. In recognition of this alarming problem, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention annually sponsors an event to provide an opportunity for the survivor community to come together for support, healing, information and empowerment.

Local chapters of the foundation hold satellite conferences that are simultaneously linked throughout the country, and internationally as a unique way of connecting survivors. This year the Alabama satellite conference will be held at the Shelby County Health Department on Saturday, Nov. 17 at noon. The conference will be for those who have experienced the loss of a loved one to suicide and allow them the opportunity to connect with thousands of other survivors by sharing their story.

“Public health is pleased to have the opportunity to offer a location to have this conference and support the Suicide Prevention Task Force, as well as survivors in the state,” said Dollie Hambrick, director of the Social Work Division at the Alabama Department of Public Health. “We hope to make this conference available next year in several other locations.”

The survivor conference’s goal is to not only connect others who have survived the tragedy of suicide loss, but to also facilitate the healing process for survivors who may be experiencing emotional distress and the long term effects of complicated mourning in the aftermath of suicide. As a result of the loss of a loved one, many survivors have an elevated risk for possible suicidal tendencies later in life, as well as other personal issues.

“A conservative estimate is that for every one death to suicide there are at least six persons directly impacted by the loss,” said Judith Harrington, suicide coordinator for the Alabama Suicide Prevention Task Force. “Many survivors experience greater risk for lost potential, disrupted work and vocational stability, depression and broken relationships.”

Some of the statements Harrington has heard in her survivors’ bereavement group meetings are:

- “I feel so lonely and isolated because my friends and even family do not seem to understand how complicated this is. You really find out who your friends are.”
- “I’ve lost family and friends, but my grief in those losses was nothing like what I feel now.”
- “No one understands what this is like...only other survivors seem to know exactly what it is like.”

The conference is free and open to the public. For those survivors who are not able to attend in person, they can arrange to view the conference via webcast on the Internet. Interested persons can contact the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Web site at www.afsp.org to arrange this option.

For more information on the conference, please Judith Harrington at preventsuicideinAL@att.net or Kim Tipton at k_tipton@afsp.org. If you would like to receive help with suicidal risk and/or bereavement, please call the Crisis Center at (205) 323-7777 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK.

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