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DHHS to Recognize Behavioral Health Awareness Month in May Department Reminds Nebraskans That Treatment is Available

Lincoln— Statewide, roughly 62,000 adults have a serious mental illness and 134,000 adults are impacted by drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, according to data from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

During Behavioral Health Awareness Month in May, DHHS is reaffirming its commitment to these individuals and all other Nebraskans who may need behavioral health services.

“This month gives us an opportunity to recognize the challenges facing Nebraskans with behavioral health concerns and let them know that help and support is available,” said Courtney Phillips, DHHS CEO. “We will continue to improve our behavioral healthcare system in order to provide individuals with the appropriate care, at the appropriate time and in the appropriate setting. After all, with treatment, recovery is possible.”

Unfortunately, recent national statistics show many people with behavioral health needs are not seeking treatment. In 2013, the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found that of the over 15 million people who reported having a major depressive episode, only about one-third of them sought professional help.

This is a trend that DHHS’ Division of Behavioral Health hopes to change.

“Mental health is a primary part of good physical health, so it’s important for everyone to take stock of mental health and wellness,” said Sheri Dawson, acting director of the DHHS Division of Behavioral Health. “When people need help, there is a place to go. Services and supports for children, adults and their families are available throughout Nebraska.”

The Division of Behavioral Health works with partners in the community substance abuse and behavioral health regions, agencies and programs to increase mental health awareness and education.

“People across the life span who experience a behavioral health challenge need to know that they don’t have to go it alone,” said Beth Baxter, Behavioral Health Region 3 Program Administrator in Kearney. “We have effective treatment and support services in communities across Nebraska that help people every day live fulfilling, healthy and productive lives.”

Services and efforts promote early intervention and prevention strategies that help people access the supports they need, when they need them to increase their opportunities for happier and healthier lives.

Examples of coordinated efforts include:

- Through the **System of Care** planning grant, DHHS and state partners – including youth and families – have developed a strategic plan to better address the behavioral health needs of youth. The Strategic Plan is at: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/soc>
- DHHS recently received a multi-year **Garrett Lee Smith grant** to prevent suicides and suicide attempts for youth ages 10-24. The project calls for increasing training and coordination with school personnel, network treatment providers and organizations serving young adults, so youths at risk for suicide can be better identified and referred to the appropriate support services.
- The **Network of Care** is an online resource that connects people to information about behavioral health services in their area and across the state. The Network of Care is at: www.dhhs.ne.gov/networkofcare.
- A five-year **Strategic Prevention Framework – Partners for Success** grant awarded by SAMHSA focuses on underage drinking prevention for 12-20 year olds in 11 Nebraskan counties that have been found to have high risk factors in that target population.

Some of the Behavioral Health Awareness Month activities in May include:

DHHS and partners are sponsoring the **Success, Hopes and Dreams** Annual Behavioral Health Conference May 12-13 in Lincoln. The conference is for consumers, treatment professionals, peer support specialists and case managers. For more information, visit <http://www.nebraskastateconference.org>

Communities across Nebraska will shine a spotlight on children's mental health May 28-30 when the Eagle Riders sponsor a Pony Express motorcycle ride across the state. For more information, visit the Nebraska Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health website at <https://nefamilies4kids.org/2014-pony-express-ride/> or call Candy Kennedy-Goergen at (877) 239-8880.

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Additional resources for families:

The **Nebraska Family Helpline** is a free, confidential resource for parents with questions or concerns about their child's behavior. Trained counselors are available to deal with issues from bullying, drugs and thoughts of suicide to sharing and obedience issues. The Helpline is funded by DHHS and operated by Boys Town. Call 1-888-866-8660.

If you or someone you know is suicidal or in emotional distress, contact the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> or 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to speak with trained crisis workers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.