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PRESS RELEASE

YOUTH SUICIDE A SERIOUS ISSUE IN OCEAN COUNTY!

(Toms River) - While the opioid crisis continues to grab headlines, another public health problem has quietly emerged in New Jersey, and here at home in Ocean County. Suicide has become the third leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 10-24. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), 14 young people between the ages of 10 and 24 died by suicide from 2013 to 2015 in Ocean County. That total jumps to 283 cases for the entire state during the same two year period.

"Sadly, society is putting more and more pressure on our young people today. Peer pressure, bullying, social media, drugs and alcohol are just some of the social challenges young people are trying to navigate," says Ocean County Freeholder Gerry P. Little.

The AFSP study also revealed that from 2013 to 2015, Ocean County had 1 of the 3 highest rates in the state for suicide attempts and self-inflicted injuries among 10 to 24 year olds.

"It's become another public health issue with too many sad endings," says Daniel E. Regenye, OCHD Public Health Coordinator. However, research has shown suicide deaths can be preventable. The key is promoting the work of suicide prevention and mental health awareness. Increased collaboration with state, local and community partners is essential for success."

The key to success is educating pediatricians, primary health care providers, school personnel and families on how to recognize the warning signs of suicide and what action to take when intent is disclosed.

"Help is available. Young people need to be encouraged to speak with a trusted adult or call a suicide prevention hotline if they feel overwhelmed, depressed or are having suicidal thoughts, explains Kimberly Reilly, OCHD Chief of Administrative Services. "Parents that are concerned their child may be suffering from depression or suicidal tendencies need to act quick - do not wait, seek professional help right away."

As a parent, symptoms may not be easy to detect. Divorce, remarriage, relationship problems and an influential social media environment are just some of the challenges that can create emotional upheaval that many young people aren't ready to handle.

"Earlier detection means earlier treatment," Regenye added. "That's why it is so important for parents, loved ones and educators to keep an eye out for the signs of depression or any other mental health concerns."

To learn more about youth suicide, or for links to suicide prevention websites and hotlines, please visit the OCHD website at www.ochd.org or follow us on Twitter@OCpublichealth or follow us on Facebook. Also, please check out our new website at www.phu2.org, to access and learn more about our Public Health is You Too! campaign to help equip you to take simple steps to improve your health.

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