

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The Center for Mental Health Committed to Curbing Suicide on Western Slope**

**Montrose, CO – October 9, 2019** -- As September's Suicide Prevention Awareness month is behind us and we head into the holiday season, The Center for Mental Health (CMH) wants to continue to make the community aware of the local behavioral resources available. These are especially critical if someone is having suicidal thoughts, or knows of someone who is, and needs intervention or care along the Western Slope. CMH recently expanded mental and behavioral care offerings across the region, so finding a professional who will listen and help is easier than ever before.

"We recognize and know that suicide rates are increasing across our community. While there are several contributing factors, the one thing we can do is increase access to quality behavioral healthcare for those having suicidal thoughts and for family members who are concerned about loved ones," said Shelly Spalding, CEO of The Center for Mental Health. "We need to communicate with our community about the warning signs and the ways we can help save lives."

In 2019, CMH opened new locations in Telluride, Crested Butte, and in Montrose with the new Crisis Walk-In Center (CWC) that opened in September. It has expanded services in several of its Western Slope locations to meet the needs of the community. "The newly opened CWC is open all day, every day. Anyone, of any age can walk in if they feel in danger of hurting themselves or others," said Amanda Jones, Chief Clinical Officer. "In our first few weeks we have already been able to support teens locally experiencing suicidal thoughts. We have given them a safe place, close to home, where they can be treated with their family during a difficult time," said Jones.

**(more)**

Unfortunately, suicide affects everyone at some time. It maybe the loss of a close friend or family member, a member of the community, or even hearing about it on the news. At times, we may worry that someone we know and love might be in danger of hurting themselves. So, in addition to offering urgent care for those in crisis, CMH provides classes in Mental Health First Aid and suicide prevention strategies such as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and Question Persuade and Refer (QPR) so people can recognize danger signs and have tools to help others.

“I wasn’t on anyone’s radar,” said Ian Hatchett of Crested Butte. “I was happy, engaged in my social circles, and employed in a career I loved as a mountain guide. Then, I experienced the perfect storm of personal issues that led me down a dangerous path. If it weren’t for the combination of my friends, my therapist, and The Center for Mental Health, I simply wouldn’t be here today. I will do anything in my power to share my experience in the hopes that I can make a difference in someone’s life.”

Hatchett isn’t alone, in fact, suicide rates nationally are on the rise. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicides are the leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 34 and the fourth leading cause of death among adults 35 to 54 years old. In fact, there were more than twice as many suicides (47,173) in the United States as there were homicides (19,510) in 2018. In addition, the Western Slope mirrors the national average of rural suicide rates consistently being higher than those in urban areas.

According to the Colorado Institute of Health, Colorado has one of the highest suicide rates in the country, and that rate is especially prevalent in the state’s southwestern corner and the Western Slope, followed by a handful of eastern plains counties. Experts agree that the combination of geographical isolation, access to guns, limited or lack of mental health care, and the stigma around seeking help each contribute to those increasing suicide rates.

“We know that as a rural area, we need to be on higher alert to those who feel lost and alone. We have an esteemed staff of professionals who know what to look for and who understand how to treat someone who is feeling hopeless,” said Kimberly Behounek, Regional Director for Gunnison and Crested Butte.

**(more)**

“I had reached my lowest point and had given up,” added Hatchett. “Luckily, my therapist at CMH had the right suitcase of skills and gave me permission to forgive myself for giving up. As a nation, we need to demystify the process of mental healthcare and break the prejudices around it.” When Hatchett needed help, he traveled to CMH in Gunnison to get care. “They didn’t have anything available near me in Crested Butte at the time, but now CMH has an office right here.”

“We recognized that easier access to quality behavioral health is one fundamental and unique challenge that we could address.” said Spalding. “We still have a way to go, but we have made a lot of progress in making mental healthcare more accessible in our community by providing more local providers and new, convenient locations.”

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The Center for Mental Health offers the following short list of risk factors associated with the possibility for suicidal behavior on their blog at [www.centermh.org/blog](http://www.centermh.org/blog):

**RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE** ([suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org))

- History of mental health issues
- Alcohol and other substance use and abuse
- History of trauma or abuse
- Major physical illnesses
- Previous suicide attempt(s) or family history of suicide
- Loss of relationship(s), job, or financial loss
- Lack of social support and sense of isolation or hopelessness
- Stigma associated with asking for help
- Lack of healthcare, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Local clusters of suicide or exposure to others who have died by suicide (in real life or via the media and Internet)

Knowing the warning signs may help determine if you, a friend, or loved one is at risk for suicide. If so, please call The Center for Mental Health Crisis Line at **970.252.6220** (locally) or Colorado Crisis Services at **1-800-493-TALK** (8255) (statewide).

**SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS** ([suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org))

- Expressing the desire to die or to kill themselves
- Researching ways to kill themselves
- Talking about feeling hopeless, trapped, in pain, or having no reason to live
- Expressing concern about being a burden to others
- Behaving recklessly
- Increasing alcohol and substance use
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves
- Extreme mood swings

**The Center for Mental Health can help by phone, online, or in person.**

**Phone**

If you are in crisis, please call our confidential crisis line at **970.252.6220** or text **741741** to connect with a national crisis counselor.

**Online**

Using CMH's confidential, free, and quick self-screening tool, you can assess your mental health situation online.

**In person**

The Center for Mental Health has locations across the Western Slope — you can make an appointment or walk-in for help at [www.centermh.org/locations](http://www.centermh.org/locations).

**Take a Mental Health First Class**

View our [calendar of events](#) to find a training class near you.

**Crisis Walk-In-Center**

The Crisis Walk-in Center in Montrose provides urgent behavioral health to anyone in our region. If you think you or someone you know is in danger of hurting themselves, walk in 24-hours a day, 365 days a year for help. No insurance is needed.

The Center for Mental Health is a nonprofit organization seeking to promote mental health and well-being. It provides behavioral healthcare services through more than ten facilities across 10,000 square miles including Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties. Visit [www.centermh.org](http://www.centermh.org) to learn more.

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