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The Center for Mental Health Committed to Helping Our Communities Combat Depression and Anxiety Over the Holidays

Montrose, CO – December 17, 2019 – With the holidays in full swing, The Center for Mental Health (CMH) wants to inform and remind the community of the local behavioral resources available. These resources are especially critical if someone on the Western Slope is feeling hopeless or having suicidal thoughts, or knows of someone who is. CMH recently expanded behavioral healthcare offerings across the region, so finding urgent mental health care is easier than ever before.

Although the holidays are promoted as a time for family and fun, not everyone feels festive. In fact, the holidays are a time when depression and sadness can really set in. “We recognize that this is the time of year when people can feel increasingly isolated and alone,” said Shelly J. Spalding, CEO of The Center for Mental Health. “We have expanded our care on the Western Slope in the effort to helping those who need counseling or crisis services this time of year.”

To better serve their six-county service area, CMH opened new locations in Telluride and Crested Butte, and a brand new Crisis Walk-In Center (CWC) in Montrose. Services have been expanded in several of CMH’s Western Slope locations to meet the needs of the community. “Our Crisis Walk-In Center is open every day, including Christmas. Anyone, of any age may walk in if they feel in danger of hurting themselves or others, or just can’t cope and don’t know where to turn” said Amanda Jones, Chief Clinical Officer. “When we opened our Crisis Walk-in Center in September, we had a number of local teens who needed support to cope with suicidal thoughts and other crises. We are a safe place, close to home, where they can be treated with their family during a difficult time,” said Jones.

Unfortunately, suicide has impacted almost everyone at some time in their life. 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 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. Unfortunately, Colorado's Western Slope has higher suicide rates than Colorado's more urban areas. This is consistent with the situation in rural communities across the country.

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. "We know that as a rural area, we need to be on higher alert to those who feel lost and alone," added Spalding. "We have assembled 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, The Center's Regional Director for Gunnison and Crested Butte.

"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 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."

The Center for Mental Health offers the following short list of risk factors associated with the possibility for suicidal behavior:

RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE (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). People can also call Colorado Crisis Services at **1-800-493-TALK** (8255) or text “TALK” to 38255 (statewide).

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS (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 provides help by phone, online, or in person:

Phone: If in crisis, please call our 24/7 confidential crisis line at **970.252.6220** or text “TALK” to **38255** to connect with a 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.

Take a Mental Health First Aid 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 to learn more.

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