



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Social media campaign launches to raise awareness about teen mental health, highlight available resources

Colorado State government offices partner to unveil PSAs and host Teen-to-Teen conversation to break the silence on youth suicide prevention

Oct. 8, 2019 (DENVER, Colo.) – Continuing the conversation from September’s National Suicide Awareness Month, several state offices and partners hosted a teen-to-teen conversation this morning to raise awareness about youth suicide prevention.

The event featured a dialogue and the debut of a series of public service announcements designed to break the silence and highlight resources available for those who are experiencing an immediate safety threat or need professional support for any mental health, substance use, or emotional crisis.

Partners in this initiative include the Colorado Office of Attorney General and Safe2Tell Colorado; Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health and Colorado Crisis Services; Colorado Office of Film, Television, and Media; and Janicek Media Creative. The partners collaborated to create a video series with more than 40 students from across the state, each impacted by mental health struggles and suicide in their lives. They deliver messages aimed at their peers and parents, designed to empower youth to seek help and know where to turn for support.

Five of the students featured in the video series participated in today’s event to discuss how suicide and other mental health challenges have affected their lives, and why they chose to break the silence. They emphasized that the PSA rollout is the first step in an ongoing commitment to take action and address mental health struggles among Colorado youth.

Since 2009, Colorado has seen an almost yearly increase in the number of suicide deaths in the state. Colorado consistently ranks in the top ten states with the highest suicide rate. What is even more alarming about suicide in Colorado is the dramatic impact it has on the state’s youth. According to [a recent study](#) funded by the Colorado Attorney General’s office, between 2015 and 2017 in Colorado, there were 222 suicide deaths of young people between the ages of 10 and 18.

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"As Attorney General, I am committed to protecting the safety of all Coloradans. Tragically, suicide is a leading cause of death for our youth. Indeed, it is consistently the leading topic of anonymous tips we receive at the Safe2Tell program," said Attorney General Phil Weiser. "I give thanks to the brave young individuals, and for our partners, that are doing this work to break the silence and let teens and parents know they are not alone."

"We have to be willing and open to a different approach—one rooted in the voices of youth," said Dr. Robert Werthwein, Director of the Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health. "We cannot be complacent given the rate at which our young people are dying by suicide."

Students who participated include: Alexis McCowan from Colorado Springs, James Irwin Charter School; Olivia Janicek from Littleton, Arapahoe High School; Nick Corsi from Englewood, Cherry Creek High School; Gio Villagrana from Aurora, Cherry Creek High School; and Zoe Royer from Denver, Parker/Legend High School. More than a dozen additional students and their families were also in attendance.

The PSAs will be rolled out across social media platforms and are available for view, along with a live stream of today's event, at tiny.cc/teens2teens.

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About Safe2Tell Colorado

Safe2Tell is an anonymous reporting tool for Colorado youth and residents to report concerns for their own safety or the safety of others, 24 hours 7 days a week. If you have concerns about your safety or the safety of others, call 877-542-7233, download the mobile app, or go to Safe2Tell.org to submit an anonymous tip.

About Colorado Crisis Services

*Find out more about Colorado Crisis Services' youth campaign, *Below the Surface*, at belowthesurfaceco.com If you or someone you know is in crisis or needs help dealing with one, call this toll-free number 1-844-493-TALK (8255) or text TALK to 38255 to speak to a trained crisis counselor. For more information visit ColoradoCrisisServices.org.*