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Riverside County Suicide Prevention Coalition Hosts 3rd Annual Conference Focused on First Responders and Educators

RIVERSIDE, CA (September 19, 2024) – The annual Riverside County Suicide Prevention Coalition (SPC) Conference on Oct. 3 will offer tools and resources to effectively manage youth suicide and behavioral health crises in the community.

This year's conference will focus on first responders, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and educators. The daylong event, which is free and open to the public, gets underway at 8:30 a.m. at the Riverside Convention Center, located at 3637 Fifth St. in Riverside.

Attendees will be able to participate in breakout sessions and panel discussions, and access resources that support both professional roles and personal well-being.

Keynote presentations by Dr. Tom Golebiewski and Dr. Tim Dohrer will offer insights on implementing a Mental Health Action Plan (MHAP) that promotes mental health and well-being for all, including for at-risk individuals. Opening remarks by Third District Riverside County Supervisor Chuck Washington will highlight the County's commitment to suicide prevention.

"Suicide is a devastating issue that leaves lasting scars on our communities," Washington said. "The ripple effects touch families, friends, schools, and neighborhoods. Riverside County is committed to partnering with first responders, teachers, law enforcement, and healthcare professionals to provide the support, resources, and training needed to prevent these tragedies. Together, we can create a safety net for those in crisis."

First responders and educators often face individuals in crisis, making their role in suicide prevention crucial. This year's conference will focus on equipping them with the skills needed to handle situations effectively while emphasizing their own wellness.

According to the [American Psychological Association](#), 25% of emergency calls nationwide involve behavioral health crises, many related to suicide. For law enforcement, 10% of calls involve individuals who are suicidal, and 20% of EMS calls address suicide crises. Educators often serve as early detectors, with more than one-third reporting that students have disclosed suicidal thoughts.

The statistics underscore the need for specialized training for first responders and educators to manage such crises with skill and compassion, said Dr. Matthew Chang, Director of Riverside University Health System Behavioral Health (RUHS-BH).

“At RUHS Behavioral Health, our mission is to be a lifeline when our community faces its darkest moments,” Chang said. “We stand beside our first responders and educators, whose role in these situations saves lives and connects individuals to the care they need for long-term recovery.”

The SPC was established in 2020 by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and formed in partnership with RUHS-BH, RUHS Public Health (RUHS-PH), Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE), law enforcement, community partners and healthcare organizations. The coalition works to reduce suicide rates by increasing awareness, improving access to resources and fostering collaboration across agencies.

For more information about the coalition, visit rivcospc.org. To register for the conference, visit bit.ly/SPCconference24.

For data and information about suicide in Riverside County, visit RUHealth.org.

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About Riverside University Health System

The 439-bed Riverside University Health System (RUHS) Medical Center in Moreno Valley, Calif., is a teaching hospital and research hub with a Level I Trauma Center and the only Pediatric Intensive Care Unit in Riverside County. RUHS includes 14 Community Health Centers across Riverside County, the Public Health Department, and Behavioral Health, which provides emergency and inpatient psychiatric care. Visit RUHealth.org to learn more.