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February 22, 2021

The Honorable Kate Lieber, Co-Chair
The Honorable Rob Nosse, Co-Chair
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

SUBJECT: February 18 Committee Questions

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services on February 18, 2021, about the Behavioral Health budget. Below is a response to a question we received during that committee meeting.

1. In reference to the suicide data in the presentation, are suicide rates lower across all populations, particularly youth?

Among all ages in Oregon, there were 820 suicide deaths in 2020, compared to 910 in 2019. (Data are from the Oregon Violent Death Reporting System/ORVDRS. Note that all 2020 data are preliminary; numbers for recent months are subject to change as new information becomes available.)

Oregon state law defines "youth suicides" as suicides among people ages 10 to 24. Among this group, there were 106 suicide deaths in 2020, compared to 116 in 2019.

Among children 17 and younger, there were 27 suicide deaths in 2020. This is more than the 21 suicide deaths in 2019, but fewer than in 2016 (28), 2017 (31), and 2018 (41).

Oregon continues to have overall suicide rates above the national average.

Because of the pandemic, OHA began extensive internal monitoring of suicide deaths, visits to Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centers for suicide-related reasons, and other indicators of suicide ideation and activity. OHA continues to monitor these trends.

In addition, OHA has recognized that acting now to support youth, families and schools to mitigate the stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual learning, and other traumas can help prevent future negative mental health impacts of the pandemic and other traumas. That is why OHA has worked on a number of response efforts to support schools and students during virtual learning due to COVID-19 restrictions. These efforts include:

- Launched the Remote Suicide Risk Assessment and Safety Planning phone line and created a Remote Risk Assessment Referral Flow Chart to support school administrators, school counselors and other school based mental health staff.
- Contracted Lines for Life to create the Oregon Behavioral Health Support Line to provide live support for Oregonians to find a behavioral health provider with availability that meets their insurance needs and care needs.
- Developed the Youth Suicide Assessment in Virtual Environments (Youth SAVE) Training created specifically for Oregon youth-serving mental health professionals. This training equips school- and community-based mental health professionals to virtually access for and intervene with youth who have thoughts of suicide. Nearly 800 school-based mental health professionals have registered to take this training since it launched in December 2020.
- In collaboration with ODE, created a School Suicide Prevention Coordinator and regional School Suicide Prevention and Wellness Coordinators to provide training and guidance to school districts on suicide prevention and social emotional learning planning, training for school staff, and curriculum implementation for students.

There are resources available for persons at risk of suicide, including:

- Suicide Prevention National Lifeline number: 1-800-273-8255 or online chat
- Spanish Lifeline: 1-888-628-9454 or online chat
- YouthLine provides help to teens who experience a mental health crisis. The YouthLine offers teen to teen crisis help with both a phone line and a texting support line through Lines for Life. Teens respond from 4:00 to 10:00 PM Monday through Friday. Adults are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - oregonyouthline.org
 - Call 1-877-968-8491
 - Text teen2teen to 839863
- Crisis Line for Veterans: 1-800-273-8255, online chat or text 838255
- Senior Loneliness Line: 503-200-1633 or seniorlonelinessline.org
- Visit OHA website for local county crisis supports

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Please let me know if I can address any other questions you may have. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Allen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patrick M. Allen
Director