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Major Federal Agencies and Private Sector Groups Unite on A Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19

First-of-its-kind effort launched by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, will be led by the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health, Dr. Joshua Gordon, and former U.S. Rep. and Founder of The Kennedy Forum, Patrick J. Kennedy

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Recognizing the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's mental health and well-being, the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance), which serves as the nation's public and private partnership for suicide prevention, is launching the [Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19](#) (National Response). This coordinated response effort—led by Joshua Gordon, MD, PhD, director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and former Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy, founder of The Kennedy Forum—brings together influential national organizations to address mental health and prevent suicide.

According to a recent [Gallup online survey](#), Americans say their mental health is suffering more than their physical or financial health due to COVID-19. These findings underscore the urgency to address the short-term and long-term mental health consequences of this pandemic.

The Action Alliance will convene government agencies, corporations, and other non-governmental groups to comprehensively and collectively address mental health and suicide prevention. The National Response aims to:

- Leverage the nation's public-private partnership's collective influence and expertise to coordinate a national mental health and suicide prevention response
- Support and disseminate evidence-informed best practices to help communities across the nation prioritize mental health
- Unite efforts to amplify messages of hope, resiliency, and support

“Rates of suicide and overdoses were at historic levels before COVID-19 hit,” said former U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, founder of The Kennedy Forum and private sector chair for the Action Alliance's National Response. “This pandemic will fuel the fire of our country's mental health crisis unless organizations unite in a call to action. There's no more time for debate and discussion—we need all hands on deck to fast track the strategies we know will work.”

The work of the National Response will be guided by a Steering Committee comprised of senior leaders from the public and private sectors. The Steering Committee aims to drive meaningful change by focusing initially on four key areas: 1) shared messaging, 2) crisis care, 3) suicide care, and 4) policy. In addition, the Steering Committee will continue to identify health care system-level needs as this pandemic evolves.

“Building an effective response to mental health and suicide prevention in the U.S. cannot be solved by one federal agency alone. Instead, federal agencies must join forces, capabilities, leverage resources, and share lessons learned with each other and the private sector to achieve the greatest impact,” said Dr. Gordon, NIMH Director and public sector chair for the Action Alliance’s National Response. “The collective work of this National Response has the potential to change the way our country views, treats, and talks about mental health and suicide for generations to come.”

For more information, go to: **NationalMentalHealthResponse.org**

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FOR MEDIA PARTNERS:

Research shows that the media may influence suicide rates by the way they report on suicide. Evidence suggests that when the media tell stories of people positively coping in suicidal moments, more suicides can be prevented. We urge all members of the media working on these stories to refer to the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) for best practices and the recently released [Reporting on Suicide During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) guidance. In addition, please include the following resources in your reporting, as appropriate:

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
 - Military and Veterans: 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
 - Spanish Language: 1-800-273-8255 and Press 2
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text HOME To 741741
- [The Trevor Project](#):
 - TrevorLifeline: 1-866-488-7386
 - TrevorText: Text START to 678678
 - [TrevorChat](#)
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#): 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- For stories of persons with lived experience of suicidality and finding hope, refer to www.lifelineforattemptsurvivors.org.

NATIONAL ACTION ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION:

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance) is the public-private partnership working to advance the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) and make suicide prevention a national priority. The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) provides funding to [EDC](#) to operate and manage the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which launched in 2010. Additional funding to support Action Alliance efforts comes from private sector sources and donations. Learn more at theactionalliance.org and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following the Action Alliance on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).