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Changes Critical for Improving National Mental Health Crisis Services & Saving Lives

Recommended changes can help individuals in crisis and reduce suicide rates

Washington, DC – The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) released [Crisis Now: Transforming Services is Within Our Reach](#), a report that highlights the fractured mental health crisis services system in our country and recommends actions we can take to improve care for struggling individuals. Services today are ineffective, fragmented and in many cases the wrong type of care is provided in the wrong setting. Often suicidal individuals wait in Emergency Departments for long hours or are managed by law enforcement officials who may not have the resources or skillset to address their needs.

This report, developed by the Action Alliance’s Crisis Services Task Force, outlines the solution to these issues by using already existing, successful, established, and accessible models pioneered by states that are already working to fix the broken system. It recommends national and state level actions to ensure effective crisis care is comprehensive and include core elements and practices, such as:

- Better coordination, using technology for real time care coordination while providing support and meeting National Suicide Prevention Lifeline standards
- Availability of centrally deployed Mobile Crisis Services on a 24/7 basis
- Residential crisis stabilization programs
- Major health payers recognizing and reimbursing provided crisis services via support from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Department of Labor, and state Insurance Commissioners

Leaders agree that transforming crisis services is necessary to curb rising suicide rates. “If we want to reduce suicides in this country, improving mental health crisis services is a critical, immediate step,” said Doryn Chervin, Action Alliance Executive Secretary. Key principles in the report have shown to be effective for suicide reduction when applied comprehensively.

Action Alliance Executive Committee Member and co-lead of the Crisis Services Task Force, Michael Hogan, Principal for Hogan Health Solutions, LLC, asserts that, “our country’s approach to crisis mental health care must be transformed. Crisis mental health care is inconsistent and inadequate, even though it is a known effective strategy for suicide prevention, a key element to reduce psychiatric hospital bed overuse, and crucial to reducing the fragmentation of mental health care.”

“The problem with delaying is...crises are happening now,” said Action Alliance Executive Committee Member David W. Covington, LPC, MBA, co-lead of the Crisis Services Task Force and CEO & President of RI International, Inc. “We believe the recommendations in *Crisis Now* will lead to expedited and substantive changes in mental health crisis care,” said Covington.

Read the full report from the Crisis Services Task Force here: [Crisis Now: Transforming Services is Within Our Reach](#)

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

(www.ActionAllianceforSuicidePrevention.org) 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, through the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) operates the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010 by former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates with the goal of saving 20,000 lives in five years. Contact: Liliya Melnyk, lmelnyk@edc.org

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