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Action Alliance Announces First-Ever American Indian and Alaska Native *Hope For Life Day* to Promote Suicide Prevention

Hope for Life Day Toolkit available for public use

(Washington, D.C.) – Today, the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's](#) (Action Alliance) American Indian and Alaska Native Task Force announced that the first-ever National American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Suicide Prevention ***Hope for Life Day***. The ***Hope for Life Day*** will be held annually on September 10, in conjunction with World Suicide Prevention Day. The ***Hope for Life Day*** is part of the Action Alliance's AI/AN Task Force's efforts to change the conversation about suicide and promote hope, life, cultural resiliency, and community transformation.

Native communities bear the largest burden of suicide among all racial/ethnic groups in the United States, with Native youth being disproportionately affected. In Native communities, as in other communities, suicide affects not just the people who lose their lives, but also those who are left to survive: parents, siblings, friends, families, and communities. Stigma regarding mental health and suicide is also a pressing issue affecting Native communities. National efforts to increase public awareness about how suicide affects Indian Country are therefore greatly needed.

To assist health professionals and grassroots organizers working in AI/AN communities, the AI/AN Task Force produced the [Hope for Life Day toolkit](#). The toolkit contains community engagement strategies, tips for meeting with tribal leaders, promotional materials, and suggestions for cultural activities.

“Suicide prevention depends on bringing together native communities, as ***Hope for Life Day*** will do. IHS works with partners to create a safety net of services to protect individuals against suicide risk and maximize the effectiveness of programs,” said Indian Health Service Principal Deputy Director Robert G. McSwain, public sector co-lead of the AI/AN Task Force. “Every suicide affects the whole tribal community and that is why IHS provides staff and counseling resources in response to incidents of suicide. We are honored to participate in ***Hope for Life Day*** to build awareness for communities to address the critical health need for suicide prevention strategies.”

“***Hope for Life Day*** provides the opportunity to equip tribal communities with suicide prevention tools, focus on the needs of Native youth, and spotlight current efforts for Native suicide prevention,” said Doryn Chervin, DrPH, Action Alliance Executive Secretary and Vice President and Senior Scientist, Education Development Center.

The AI/AN Task Force is a public partnership formed to advance the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* as it pertains to AI/AN communities. Public sector co-lead Kevin K. Washburn, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the US Department of Interior, said “The AI/AN Task Force will continue to vigorously advance suicide prevention efforts in native communities. Through *Hope for Life Day*, we will promote hope and cultural resiliency, with a goal of community transformation around suicide prevention. With each annual *Hope for Life Day*, we look to expand this life-saving work and dramatically reduce the suicide rate in the Native American population.”

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

The *National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention* 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.

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