



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

Post Office Box 1797

Richmond, Virginia 23218-1797

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www.dbhds.virginia.gov

JAMES W. STEWART, III
COMMISSIONER

January 10, 2014

The Honorable Walter A. Stosch
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
General Assembly Building, Suite 626
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Stosch:

I am pleased to submit this letter as the Department's 2013 *Progress Report on the Development and Implementation of a Comprehensive Statewide Suicide Prevention Plan* to comply with the reporting requirements of Item 314.N. of the 2013 *Appropriation Act*. The specific *Appropriations Act* language is set forth below:

N. Out of this appropriation, \$500,000 the second year from the general fund shall be used to develop and implement a comprehensive statewide suicide prevention program. The Commissioner of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), in collaboration with the Departments of Health, Education, Veterans Services, Aging and Rehabilitative Services, and other partners shall develop and implement a statewide program of public education, evidence-based training, health and behavioral health provider capacity-building, and related suicide prevention activity. The Commissioner shall provide a progress report on this effort to the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by November 1, 2013.

Suicide Prevention Activities to Date

1) Inter-Agency Collaboration

Virginia has a strong foundation for suicide prevention in place. Since 2009, DBHDS and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) have chaired an Interagency Suicide Prevention Committee to establish a collaborative structure to plan, coordinate and implement suicide prevention activities in the Commonwealth. In addition to DBHDS and VDH the Committee includes:

- Department of Veterans Services (DVS),
- Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS),
- Department of Education,

- The Planning Council,
- Virginia Association of Community Services Boards (VACSB),
- National Alliance on Mental Illness of Virginia (NAMI-VA),
- Virginia Suicide Prevention Coalition,
- Virginia Organization of Consumers Asserting Leadership (VOCAL),
- US Department of Veterans Affairs, and
- Suicide prevention, survivor and support representatives.

The Interagency Suicide Prevention Committee to date has:

- Completed a needs assessment of CSB suicide prevention activity to understand what kinds of suicide prevention activities CSBs were involved in, who were their partners, and what was needed to strengthen these efforts (2010);
- Convened seven Regional Stakeholder Summits (May - June) throughout Virginia. These one-day summits, hosted by DBHDS, VDH and DVS, brought together a total of 578 stakeholders to understand how suicide was affecting their own communities by looking at their local suicide statistics, and what suicide prevention resources and services were available to them; to identify their communities' needs in regard to suicide; and to initiate planning to address those needs
- Developed a comprehensive draft *Suicide Prevention Across the Lifespan Plan for the Commonwealth of Virginia* (in progress, to be completed by December 1, 2013).

2) **Training**

- **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)**

In April 2012, DBHDS contracted with Calgary-based Living Works, Inc., to train and certify 24 individuals to become Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) trainers here in Virginia. Of these, 20 are CSB treatment and prevention staff members, two are DBHDS facility staff members and two are DVS Wounded Warrior staff. These new ASIST trainers provided training to 97 individuals in the two-day ASIST model for suicide prevention. During SFY 2013, ASIST trainers provided ASIST training to approximately 725 individuals throughout the state, including CSB personnel and local community members.

- ***Because Life Matters: Preventing Suicide through Identification and Treatment Conference, Virginia Beach, VA, (September 12, 2013)***

DBHDS was approached by representatives from Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters (CHKD) in Norfolk, VA, to participate in and support a major suicide prevention conference for health care and suicide prevention stakeholders in the Tidewater area. DBHDS became a co-sponsor of the event, which brought approximately 160 local providers and advocates together with national suicide prevention experts from SAMHSA, the Jason Foundation, and the American Association of Suicidology, along with experts from DBHDS and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to learn about suicide prevention, the impact of suicide on Tidewater Virginia, and the Commonwealth's planning efforts for the future.

- **Virginia Medical Assisted Rehabilitation Programs Conference**

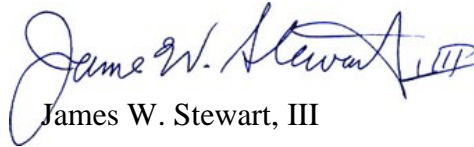
DBHDS will present a program on Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction and Recovery to the Virginia Medical Assisted Rehabilitation Programs Conference in mid-October, 2013.

3) DBHDS Infrastructure Development

On August 19, 2013, a full-time Suicide Prevention/Mental Health First Aid Coordinator was hired at DBHDS whose responsibilities include management of the Department's Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) initiative as well as DBHDS suicide prevention activity.

Please feel free to contact the department if you have questions about the report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James W. Stewart, III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the last name "Stewart" being the most prominent part.

James W. Stewart, III

Cc: The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.
The Hon. William A. Hazel, MD
Joe Flores
John Pezzoli
Jim Martinez
Ruth Anne Walker



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JAMES W. STEWART, III
COMMISSIONER

January 10, 2014

The Honorable Lacey E. Putney
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
General Assembly Building, Room 947
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Delegate Putney:

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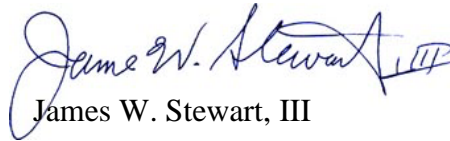
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James W. Stewart, III

Cc: The Honorable Riley E. Ingram
The Hon. William A. Hazel, MD
Susan Massart
John Pezzoli
Jim Martinez
Ruth Anne Walker