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Crisis & Counseling Centers Now Offers Youth & Family Navigator Services for Young People, ages 10 – 24, At-Risk of Suicide Across Nine Maine Counties

An evidence-based program, the first of its kind in Maine, will be implemented in an effort to reduce the rate of suicide deaths, suicide attempts, and suicidal ideation among young people in Maine, ages 10 -24.

(AUGUSTA, Maine, January 25, 2021) – The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (MECDC) has awarded Crisis & Counseling Centers (C&C) funding for implementation of a Youth Suicide Prevention program. Since notification of award in October C&C has developed an outline for an innovative, evidence-based program for adolescents at risk of suicide across Region 2, which covers nine counties in Maine (Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Sagadahoc, Somerset, and Waldo). C&C is pleased to announce that its Youth Suicide Prevention programming is now available to young people ages 10 – 24 across Region 2.

The MECDC identifies suicide as the second leading cause of death among Maine youth, ages 10 - 24. C&C intends to reduce those numbers by establishing meaningful connections and providing a full range of Youth and Family Navigator Services, staffed by Youth & Family Navigators. The Youth & Family Navigators will be tasked with creating a critical safety-net that offers opportunities for early intervention, continuous care coordination, and follow-up to ensure safety, as well as providing support for families who are often left feeling powerless and overwhelmed when their child is struggling with an acute or prolonged state of mental health crisis. The success of the program will rely heavily on communication, collaboration, the establishment of extensive community resources, a referral network, and partnerships with local schools to help raise awareness about available services for youth in Maine.

Spearheading the Suicide Prevention for At-Risk Adolescents Program is a natural fit for C&C, which has a longstanding history of providing suicide prevention services in Maine. Vanessa "Tess" Macoy (preferred pronouns: they/them/theirs), Clinical Manager of Crisis Services at C&C, oversees this new program. Macoy has extensive experience working with LGBTQ+ youth

and their families who are at disproportionately higher risk for suicide, and will provide key leadership in establishing the collaborative relationships necessary to ensure the program's success.

"Even before COVID-19, youth suicides were rising. Now we're seeing new and exacerbated risk factors of isolation, limited services, and fewer available supports which are stressing youth and their family systems alike," Macoy comments. "Our Youth & Family Navigators will work to ensure youth have access to life-saving resources, which can sometimes be as simple as a compassionate person to witness their experience."

"Crisis & Counseling Centers has a proud history of meeting clients where they are in their recovery. We work with them to find hope and begin the process of healing and to address the cause of their symptoms. This funding is making this possible in new ways," explains Mike Mitchell, LCSW who serves as C&C's CEO.

"Maine's existing crisis services are focused on responding to individuals who are in an active state of acute crisis. This funding will expand the scope of what we are already doing by providing the resources necessary to seek out young Mainers at greatest risk for suicide and to begin working with them. We will also be able to help their families and caregivers by providing additional guidance, crisis management, and intervention skills to use with their adolescents."

Fellow members of the Maine Crisis Network, The Opportunity Alliance and Aroostook County Mental Health Services have also been selected as recipients of this funding and will be providing Youth and Family Navigator Services in Regions 1 (Cumberland and York counties) and 3 (Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Hancock counties) respectively.

Additional information and resources, which continue to be compiled by C&C, are available online at: CrisisAndCounseling.org/services/youth-suicide-prevention/ .

Crisis & Counseling Centers is a 50-year-old multi-service mental health and substance abuse agency headquartered in Augusta, Maine, that provides a comprehensive treatment continuum which includes: Crisis Mobile Resolution and Crisis Stabilization Unit services; mental health, substance use disorder and co-occurring disorders treatment; statewide parent/caregiver support through its G.E.A.R. Parent Network program; Children's Targeted Case Management; PATH Case Management services; Parents Case Management for pregnant women or parents struggling with substance use disorder; correctional behavioral health care services; and medication management.

If you're thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Maine Crisis Line is available 24/7 by calling (888) 568-1112.

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