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For Immediate Release

New Mexico Awarded Suicide Prevention Grant

Santa Fe – Today, the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) announced the Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) has been awarded a suicide prevention grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help prevent suicide and suicide attempts amongst working-age adults from 25-64 years old, and to reduce the overall suicide rate and number of suicides in New Mexico. The grant totals \$1.4 million over 3 years, with the State receiving \$470,000 each year.

This initiative will focus on promoting suicide prevention as a core component to health care services and promoting and implementing effective clinical and professional practices to assess and treat individuals at risk for suicidal behaviors. A comprehensive suicide prevention model will be piloted in Taos County, based on a set of recommendations from the American Association for Suicidology, the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, and Zero Suicide. Lessons learned will be shared statewide, and policies will be developed to ensure sustainability and statewide application of suicide prevention strategies.

“New Mexico Suicide Prevention Program (NMSP) addresses the serious problem of adult suicide in New Mexico. The State ranks second in adult suicide, and needs to look at new strategies for preventing it,” said HSD Secretary Sidonie Squier. “Piloting evidence-based suicide prevention strategies in Taos County will provide New Mexico with a roadmap to eliminate suicide, statewide. Clinical training, widespread screening, and effective, culturally-sensitive treatment will enable NM to stem this tragedy.”

NMSP will address behavioral health disparities among geographically and culturally diverse populations by encouraging the implementation of strategies to increase access, service use, and outcomes among diverse populations in rural areas.

NMSP will promote recovery by fully involving people who have lived with suicide as a part of their lives (including consumers of services, community members, and family) in program design, development, implementation, and evaluation. This involves a process of change through which individuals improve health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

Taos County was chosen to pilot the program due to its existing efforts in crisis intervention, community commitment, and high rate of suicide. The Taos Suicide Prevention Program (Taos SP) will be a

comprehensive suicide prevention program that treats individuals in the clinic and the community. The program will build on the system by training staff and community partners in evidence-based screening and treatment.

The local grant will be coordinated and managed by Tri-County Community Services, Inc. of Taos. Other partners include Holy Cross Hospital, Recovery Friendly Taos, and Taos Crisis System of Care in support of the goal to have zero suicides in Taos County.

“The grant will be an important step in developing the training protocols for the crisis team and the community at large, implementing an outcome based assessment model, staffing the crisis team to include crisis follow-up services, and to resurrect the suicide prevention task force,” said Dr. Michael Kaufman, MD, Board President of the Taos Community Health Plan.

This grant announcement follows on the heels of the news that more New Mexicans are now receiving behavioral health services than at any time in the history of the state. For FY14, more than 114,314 people received services, an increase of 30.8% over the previous fiscal year.

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