

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mental Health receives grant for innovative, first of its kind suicide prevention training

Columbia, SC — Thanks in large part to a grant from the BlueCross® BlueShield® of South Carolina Foundation, the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) is expanding its already large roster of suicide prevention programs and trainings available in our state to include a new model designed for a wide variety of groups.

The funds will create a program called South Carolina Communities of Care, in which the SCDMH Office of Suicide Prevention will engage members of the community in ways they can learn, use, and maintain suicide prevention techniques. To do this, Communities of Care will use principles that are part of the widely known and proven Zero Suicide training model. Zero Suicide training, which SCDMH's Office of Suicide Prevention began providing in 2019, was developed specifically for healthcare providers, as they play a critical role in prevention and care for those at risk of suicide. The Zero Suicide model calls for training all staff in healthcare organizations and systems in prevention, intervention, and postvention. The Communities of Care program will expand this important work to include members of multiple *community* groups, like schools, faith-based groups, public organizations, non-profit providers, and more.

The Communities of Care training will also include "Trauma-Informed" techniques, meaning that it will train community leaders in how to include supporting the people they serve who have been impacted by trauma as part of their missions. SC Communities of Care will be the first ever effort that combines Zero Suicide, community suicide prevention, and trauma-informed principles so intensively to strengthen the safety net for people at risk in community settings. [Education Development Center](#), home of the [Zero Suicide Institute](#), has developed this one-of-a-kind training specifically for South Carolina.

"This project is so exciting because it drives home the fact that we *all* have a role to play in ending suicide and all of us can learn how to help someone in need," said SCDMH State Director Kenneth M. Rogers, MD. "This training helps anyone to have a more meaningful, supportive, and helpful interaction with someone who might be thinking of suicide, and these funds will help us expand the role of suicide prevention beyond healthcare organizations to community groups of many kinds, with many missions, that reach diverse groups of people."

"We know that we cannot save lives without the support of our communities, so we are investing in equipping our community members to care for one another," said SCDMH Office of Suicide Prevention Director Jennifer Butler. "SC

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Communities of Care is another way to ensure that not only individuals know how to provide resources and a culture of care, but that we build it into our social groups and organizations. *Everyone* has a role to play in suicide prevention.”

If you or your group are interested in joining the SC Communities of Care by signing up for a training, or to learn about other available suicide prevention programs and trainings, contact the SCDMH Office of Suicide Prevention at (803) 896-4740 or osp@scdmh.org.

The [South Carolina Department of Mental Health's](#) mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses, giving priority to adults with serious and persistent mental illness and children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. As South Carolina's public mental health system, it provides outpatient mental health services through a network of 16 community mental health centers and associated clinics, serving all 46 counties, and psychiatric hospital services via three State hospitals, including one for substance use treatment. In addition to mental health services, the Agency provides long-term care services in one community nursing care center and three State veterans' nursing homes.

The BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

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