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Action Alliance Launches National Strategy for Suicide Prevention *Outlines Priorities and Goal to Save 20,000 Lives in Five Years*

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Today, the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance), along with Health and Human Services Secretary, Kathleen Sebelius, and the US Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, launched a revised *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* (NSSP) that will save lives by guiding suicide prevention activities for years to come. The revised strategy emphasizes the role every American can play in protecting friends, family members, and colleagues from suicide. It also takes into account nearly a decade of research and other advancements in the field since the last strategy was published. The Action Alliance has also chosen its first set of four priorities on which it will focus its efforts, and through the combined work of people across the country, hopes to save 20,000 lives in the next five years. Jerry Reed, Director of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) and the Surgeon General co-led the Action Alliance task force that guided the revision process. Action Alliance co-chairs, The Honorable John M. McHugh, Secretary of the Army and The Honorable Gordon H. Smith, President and CEO, National Association of Broadcasters, congratulated the Task Force on its enormous accomplishment.

“We are in a unique position to make significant progress in reducing the burden of suicide in our country. With the release of this revised strategy and the focus on its first four priorities, the Action Alliance is leading the suicide prevention agenda at the national level,” said Reed.

The NSSP features 13 goals and 60 objectives that advance suicide prevention by:

- Fostering a positive public dialogue; countering shame, stigma, and silence; and building public support for suicide prevention.
- Addressing the needs of vulnerable groups and seeking to eliminate disparities, by tailoring programs to the cultural and situational contexts in which they are offered.
- Coordinating and integrating suicide prevention with existing efforts addressing health and behavioral health, and ensuring continuity of care.
- Promoting changes in systems, policies, and environments that will support and facilitate the prevention of suicide and related problems.
- Bringing together public health and behavioral health.
- Promoting efforts to reduce access to lethal means among individuals with identified suicide risks.
- Applying the most up-to-date knowledge base for suicide prevention.

The four priorities were chosen because of their potential to produce the systems-level change necessary to substantially lower the burden of suicide in our nation.

“The Action Alliance has the public-private collaboration and national leverage required to make real progress on these priorities,” stated the Honorable John M. McHugh, public-sector co-chair of the Action

THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP ADVANCING THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION



Alliance. “With a revised national strategy and the Action Alliance’s accomplishments, we can achieve our goals as long as policymakers, health care systems, the media, and the American public join with us. Everyone has a role to play in preventing suicide.”

The Action Alliance’s first set of priorities are:

1. ***Integrate suicide prevention into health care reform and encourage the adoption of similar measures in the private sector. The Action Alliance will work in partnership with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to take advantage of the exceptional opportunities health care reform offers to make large-scale system changes that can prevent suicide and save lives. Successful integration into health care reform will naturally spill over into private health systems.***
2. ***Transform health care systems to significantly reduce suicide. The Action Alliance will promote the adoption of “zero suicides” as an organizing goal for clinical systems by providing support for efforts to transform care through leadership, policies, practices, and outcome measurement.*** This priority will build on the momentum of the 2011 report released by the Action Alliance’s Clinical Care and Intervention Task Force, *Suicide Care in Systems Framework*. The Action Alliance will recruit pioneer health and behavioral health systems from across the country to implement this innovative framework within their respective organizations and will provide the support and tools they need to provide state-of-the art suicide care.
3. ***Change the public conversation around suicide and suicide prevention. The Action Alliance will leverage the media and national leaders to change the narratives around suicide and suicide prevention to ones that promote hope, connectedness, social support, resilience, treatment and recovery.*** Current media coverage and messaging around suicide can often do more harm than good by using language and ideas that make suicide seem more common than it actually is, especially when it is a response to difficult situations such as bullying, financial crisis, and repeated exposure to military combat. This priority will instead promote stories about individuals who struggled with difficult situations, yet were resilient, found help or treatment, and established a stronger will to go on living. In reality, this is what happens the vast majority of the time. It will also promote the cultural norm of providing help and support to vulnerable members of our communities, and through that, change the course for those who are struggling with thoughts of suicide.
4. ***Increase the quality, timeliness, and usefulness of surveillance data regarding suicidal behaviors. The Action Alliance will work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other public and private partners to markedly improve statistics on suicidal behaviors.*** Currently, there is a three-year lag time on national suicide data. Speeding up the release of these data will allow policy and program developers to better understand the problem of suicide, monitor real-time trends in suicidal behavior, and assess the effectiveness of our work .

“The four priorities are a bold first step toward reaching the aspirational goal we have set,” said The Honorable Gordon H. Smith, private-sector co-chair of the Action Alliance, “Some might consider a goal of



saving 20,000 lives in five years audacious, but we believe that suicide, as a public health challenge, is preventable and it would be irresponsible of us not to set a goal of saving as many lives as possible.”

To read more about the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and see the full text of the document visit www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/nssp.

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About the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, a public-private coalition, works to advance the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention by championing suicide prevention as a national priority, catalyzing efforts to implement high priority objectives of the National Strategy, and cultivating the resources needed to sustain progress. Launched in 2010 by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the Action Alliance envisions a nation free from the tragic event of suicide. For more information, see <http://www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org>.