

QUESTION, PERSUADE, REFER

Featured Resource

Karl Rosston, LCSW, Suicide Prevention Coordinator, DPHHS, gave a virtual presentation of the QPR Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Training in late June. Several from the Sheridan County Behavioral Health Coalition were able to listen in on this powerful presentation.

“QPR stands for Question, Persuade and Refer. It's called a gatekeeper training and what that means is that it really focuses on teaching the warning signs of suicide and how to intervene. It is not intended to be treatment. This is not any formal counseling or treatment. I'm not trying to turn all of you into little junior therapists. This is simply a way for you to be able to offer hope through positive action”

He included *alarming* statistics specific to Montana, data that makes clear the need for every Montanan to learn about the warning signs, risk factors, myths, protective factors, and most importantly, what to do to help someone that we are concerned about. He spoke extensively about our youth.

“If we just focus just on suicide prevention, we're going to miss the boat. Suicide is the end result of a much bigger issue.” Indeed! These issues include undiagnosed/ untreated mental health issues, especially depression; chronic pain; and interpersonal or relationship conflict. We must remember that these things *are treatable*.

There are multifactor issues for Montana, including less sunshine as vitamin D deficiencies are correlated with increased risk for depression. Montana has the second highest population of veterans in the nation and a large Native American population with 8 reservations. Another issue is alcohol consumption. “It's our favorite coping strategy”. We have poverty, availability to firearms; lack of behavioral health care including psychiatrists (especially in the eastern part of the state). Communities with high elevations have higher suicide rates. Montana has vast areas that are isolated, remote, and very rural which effects our ability to get to help, as well as crisis response time.

“Here's probably one of the biggest issues that we have that stops people from getting help and that is *stigma*. We have that cowboy hat mentality, that sense of independence. We take care of our own. We don't like to talk about our problems, especially when it comes to issues like depression and anxiety. We see it as a weakness. And we see ourselves as a burden and if you think you're a burden how likely are you to ask for help? It is a major issue in our state.”

Mr. Rosston covered several myths and facts, including the following.

“Myth: only experts can prevent suicide. Absolutely not. This is something that everyone can do - teachers, bus drivers, school lunch ladies, coaches, custodians, youth leaders, pastors, business leaders and staff”. *Everyone*.

It takes just one hour to learn the warning signs and how to offer hope and support that could avert a suicide attempt. *“Suicide is the MOST preventable form of death.”*

The Sheridan County Behavioral Health Coalition challenges all individuals, organizations, and businesses to take part in our *“Save a Life” Challenge*. Please, encourage your friends and family members, and those from your organizations and businesses to take a QPR Training by the 2022-year end. A listing of individual names, organizations and businesses participating will be published at the end of this challenge and awards presented. Watch for announcements of upcoming QPR Trainings.

Sheridan County Behavioral Health Coalition

Promoting individual, family, and community behavioral health awareness and wellness.

See other resources available at sheridancounty.crcmontana.net

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