## Howard County Youth Suicide Prevention Plan

#### Overview of Need

Suicide is a significant public health issue. While suicide is a problem across the lifespan, national suicide rates among teens and young adults have nearly tripled since the 1940's.<sup>1</sup> In Howard County, suicide was the leading cause of death for youth ages 15-19 between 2014-2016.<sup>2</sup> Despite existing efforts for the prevention of youth suicide in Howard County, local suicide rates continue to increase. Following a mandated review of child fatalities in the county, Howard County Health Department (HCHD) became increasingly concerned by a rise in youth suicide fatalities over a five-year period. Although death by suicide is a complex issue, it is preventable. In response to the locally increasing trend of youth suicide rates, research was conducted to develop a plan to decrease suicide deaths among youth in Howard County.

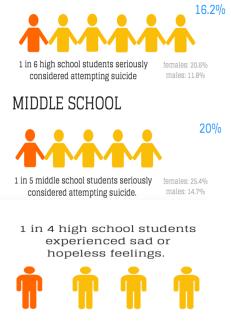
#### Progress and Accomplishments

- 1. A multi-phased Youth Suicide Prevention Plan (YSPP) has been developed. The long-term strategic plan incorporates evidence-based strategies, an awareness campaign, and community-based collaboration, coordination, and intervention in preventing suicide.
- 2. The Plan consists of five intervention pillars with corresponding strategies and activities that are approaches to preventing youth suicide:
  - Increase Awareness and Reduce Stigma
  - Prevention
  - Early Identification and Intervention
  - Referral to treatment
  - Postvention
- 3. A social marketing awareness campaign has been developed which includes social/digital media, print material, and community presentations and trainings.
- 4. A project work plan and evaluation structure has been developed to monitor progress.
- 5. A Youth Suicide Prevention Coordinator has been recruited to oversee the long-term project and activities within the plan.
- 6. Advisory groups consisting of community stakeholders, community members, agency professionals, and youth will help oversee the implementation of the plan.



### Supporting Data and Plans<sup>3</sup>

# HIGH SCHOOL



### Challenges

- Addressing the diversity of Howard County, acknowledging various cultures, languages, races/ethnicities, religions, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, and gender identities.
- Negative stigma about mental illness.
- Racial and gender disparities in suicide rates.
- Sexual minority youth disparities in suicide rates.
- Risk factors that influence youth suicide.

Howard County Youth Suicide Prevention Plan, Updated February 2019

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Maryland Department of Health. Maryland Vital Statistics Annual Reports: 2008-2017

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Deaths, percent of total deaths, and death rates for the 15 leading causes of death in 5-year age groups, by race and Hispanic origin, and sex: United States, 2016. Retrieved from <u>https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/lcwk/lcwk1 hr 2016.pdf</u> <sup>3</sup> Maryland Vital Statistics Administration,2016 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention