

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST DECLARES MARCH 24, 2010
SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY AT THE CAPITAL**

~ A day to promote education and awareness about suicide prevention~

TALLAHASSEE- Suicide Prevention Day at the Capital is a statewide event in which the Office of Suicide Prevention and Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition are joined in Tallahassee by advocates, survivors, grassroots organizations, other state agencies, and youth to bring suicide to the forefront as a public health issue. Beginning at 8:00 AM, multiple advocacy and human service organizations will be hosting educational display tables in the Capitol Plaza Rotunda. A press conference will begin at 11:00 AM in the 22nd floor observatory featuring Department of Children and Families Secretary, George Sheldon; Director of the Office of Drug Control, Colonel Bruce Grant; Senator Eleanor Sobel; former Department of Corrections Secretary, Colonel Jim McDonough; and Chair of the Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition, Judy Broward.

According to the Florida Department of Health, 2,723 Floridians lost their lives to suicide in 2008 at a rate of 7 people per day. Of those, 231 were between the ages of 10 and 24. Suicide is also the second leading cause of death among American college students. Sadly, many Florida families and communities have been affected by the suicide deaths of their loved ones, friends, classmates, co-workers and neighbors.

“In our state, suicide is tragically the third-leading cause of death for youth,” notes Lieutenant Governor Jeff Kottkamp. “There is much that we can do to ensure that all Florida’s citizens have access to care and no longer have to suffer in silence. It is imperative that we improve the quality of life for Floridians by promoting a culture that restores hope, fosters help-seeking behaviors, and builds resilience and connectedness among communities, families, and individuals in order to create a strong foundation from which people can successfully face life stress.”

The 2007 Florida Legislature passed a bill which was signed into law by Governor Crist that created the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention within the Office of Drug Control to coordinate and provide oversight to statewide efforts. This law also established the Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council to advise and make recommendations to the statewide office.

The Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention is charged with coordinating Florida's suicide prevention efforts by developing mechanisms for implementing the *Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy*, providing oversight, building capacity, creating policy, and mobilizing communities, with the overall goal of lowering suicidality and improving quality of life for Floridians.

This year, the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention has put forth Suicide Prevention Education Legislation, SB 434 / HB 1061. This bill amends current statute to add suicide prevention education to school districts’ professional development plans as an option for school personnel to choose from when deciding how to fulfill their in-service training requirements. It does not mandate training, nor does it cost anything. For more information, please contact Erin MacInnes.

To learn more about Suicide Prevention Day and other suicide prevention initiatives, please visit the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention website at <http://www.HelpPromoteHope.com>.