

Montana Native Youth Reduction Advisory Coalition

- The current Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Advisory Council (Coalition), appointed by DPHHS Director Sheila Hogan, is comprised of four members (two adults, two youth) representing every Tribe and Urban Indian Health Center in Montana.
- The Coalition built the Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Strategic Plan, leads the effort on what portions of the plan are to be focused on, and makes recommendations to DPHHS on how to best use the available funds toward implementation. To date, DPHHS either has or is implementing all of the Coalition's recommendations.
- At the November 15, 2018 Coalition meeting in Helena, the Native youth representatives held a breakout session of their own. They met and reported out to the full group about their ideas of addressing suicide in their communities.



Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Strategic Plan

- In January 2017, the Strategic Plan to address the suicide rate among Native youth was developed. It was updated in January 2018.
- The Coalition has chosen to primarily focus on one key strategic pillar – the adoption of the evidence-based prevention model, **Zero Suicide**, within their own communities.
- In 2018, as recommended by the Coalition, DPHHS provided direct funds to Tribes and Urban Indian Health Centers to be used to support local planning and implementation of Zero Suicide, and to seek training for self-care best practices for frontline health and behavioral health staff and community members.
- The Zero Suicide efforts are representative of a significant partnership with tribal, Urban Indian Health Centers, and Indian Health Service representatives across the state. DPHHS plays a facilitation role in this collaborative effort.

Background

- In 2015, Governor Bullock developed an initiative to reduce suicide among Native youth in Montana and successfully secured \$250,000 through the 64th Montana Legislature (House Bill 2) to implement the initiative.
- A formal tribal consultation facilitated by DPHHS spearheaded activities under the Governors' 2015 initiative, where the need for a statewide approach was identified.
- In November 2016, the Coalition of Tribes and Urban Indians initially convened with Lieutenant Governor Mike Cooney and the historical partnership began with tribal, federal, state, local, and organizational stakeholders to address Native youth suicides.
- House Bill 118 was passed in the 2017 Legislature, and appropriated \$250,000 to DPHHS for assisting with state and tribal efforts to continue implementing the action steps of the Strategic Plan.

Four Strategic Pillars of the Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Strategic Plan

1. Launch a statewide Zero Suicide Initiative

- The Zero Suicide model is a comprehensive approach to suicide care which aims to reduce the risk of suicide for individuals seen in health care systems. **The foundational belief of Zero Suicide is that suicide deaths for individuals under care within health and behavioral health systems are preventable.**
- The Advisory Council (Coalition), established in January 2017, met in April 2017 for an introduction to the Zero Suicide model and to set the pace for members to be community champions for the initiative. The Coalition actively recruited Tribes, Urban Indian Health Centers, and IHS health and behavioral health programs to ensure wide representation across the state.
- The Zero Suicide Academy was held in October 2017 in Helena, MT and was presented by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center. This historic event spearheaded the implementation of Zero Suicide across the state of Montana within tribal and urban Indian communities. From these efforts, each Tribe and Urban Indian Health Center now has an established and trained group of individuals within their community health and behavioral health organizations to support and lead Zero Suicide implementation.
- DPHHS ensures bi-monthly newsletters are sent to Coalition representatives (52 members) that include tools, resources, and local Zero Suicide success stories.
- DPHHS coordinates and provides webinars and technical support as requested by the Coalition to keep representatives from each community connected and informed regarding Zero Suicide resources as they implement and tailor a flexible approach within their communities.
- The Billings Area Indian Health Service is implementing the Zero Suicide initiative within their service units.
- A Zero Suicide grant for adults (ages 25 and older) was awarded to DPHHS. This grant will specifically target American Indian adults and will be implemented in partnership with the Blackfeet Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Fort Belknap Tribes, Fort Peck Tribes, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Missoula Urban Indian Health Center, and North American Indian Alliance's health and behavioral health systems. This will complement the Native youth suicide work done by the Coalition and provides additional funding to operationalize Zero Suicide in tribal and urban communities.

2. Support local community healing and transformation

- Flexibility is established to ensure Zero Suicide initiative activities fit each community's needs and resources.

3. Empower Native youth

- The newly appointed Coalition included two additional youth slots for a total of four slots per Tribe and Urban Indian Health Center.

4. Reinforce frontline healers

- Funds were provided to Tribes and Urban Indian Health Centers to seek training for frontline health and behavioral health staff and community members in self-care practices.

