FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 29, 2009

Fact Sheet: Alaska Youth Suicide Prevention Project
Fiscal years 2009–2011

History
In October 2008, the Division of Behavioral Health, Prevention and Early Intervention Services was awarded a $1.5 million federal Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act youth suicide prevention grant — $500,000 per year for three years — from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This grant is the basis for the Alaska Youth Suicide Prevention Project.

Goals and outcomes
The Alaska Youth Suicide Prevention Project will build or strengthen suicide prevention programs and services in three regions. The successful applicants, in the Fairbanks, Bethel and Southeast regions, are to:

- Increase Alaska residents’ understanding that youth suicide is preventable.
- Increase promotion of healthy social and emotional growth and youth development.
- Increase access to and availability of behavioral health services.
- Increase use of suicide prevention research and evaluation methods.
- Decrease suicide and suicidal behavior among Alaska’s youth.

Target groups
The project targets high risk youth populations, including Alaska Native male teens; military youth 18–24; early-teen girls who have high rates of depression onset; gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth, and youth in residential/institutional settings such as youth detention or foster care.

Team approach
Regional suicide prevention teams will develop strategic regional plans.

- Plans will be culturally responsive and sustainable. They will target youth and include early prevention, intervention and suicide-attempt follow-up strategies. The teams will include representation from school districts, community youth organizations, mental health providers, churches, parent groups, juvenile justice, children’s protective services and other youth-related groups.
- The University of Alaska Anchorage, Behavioral Heath Research Services will evaluate the project. Evaluation will include an ethnographic analysis for each region. Behavioral Heath Research Services will also pilot a campus program at the university.

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