



Department of Health & Social Services
Statewide Suicide Prevention Council
JOINT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 23, 2012

Contact: Kate Burkhart, 907-465-4667, kate.burkhart@alaska.gov

Sarana Schell, 907-269-8041, cell 907-398-1480, sarana.schell@alaska.gov

Iron Dog racers partner with state to promote mental health, prevent suicide

Racers promote Careline, invite all Alaskans to help prevent suicide

ANCHORAGE — Iron Dog racers are again this year carrying the message that suicide is preventable, and inviting all Alaskans to join the prevention effort. This year's messengers are Iron Dog Team 40: rookie Archie Agnes and second-year racer Arnold Marks, both of Tanana. The state Division of Behavioral Health printed sports cards and posters with the racers' photos, the message that "Life is a team effort!" and contact information for Careline, Alaska's toll-free statewide suicide prevention hotline.

Marks and Agnes have stepped up to share a three-point message of hope and purpose:

1. Suicide is preventable. We know how to foster mental health, which suicide-risk evaluation programs are effective and how to intervene when appropriate.
2. We can all help. Alaskans can attend or adopt school- and community-based programs that teach students and community members how to identify signs of depression, how to reach out and how to connect people to help.
3. Need help? Get help. "Life is a team effort!" the cards and posters say. Iron Dog racers ride as teams because it makes sense to use the buddy system when covering 2,000 rough, remote miles. All of us hit rough patches in life. If you need help, call Careline at 1-877-266-HELP (4357) or chat online at www.CarelineAlaska.com.

The highly trained Alaskans who staff Careline welcome calls and online chats from people who are in crisis, concerned about someone else, grieving for someone who died by suicide, or who just feel down. Careline is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If all lines are busy, calls roll to another accredited call center.

The 2011 and 2012 Iron Dog/Careline campaigns are designed to raise awareness of Careline, and encourage Alaskans to take steps to prevent suicide. Alaska's recently released five-year statewide suicide prevention action plan lists steps for individuals, communities and organizations.

The plan, posters and cards are posted on www.hss.state.ak.us/suicideprevention, the website for the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council.

###