

A Proclamation in Recognition of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month: September 2023

WHEREAS, suicide is one of the most disruptive and tragic events a family and a community can experience, with more than 1,100 lives lost in Tennessee each year and an estimated 25 attempted suicides for each suicide death; and

WHEREAS, suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in Tennessee, the third leading cause of death among youth and young adults ages 10 to 24, as well as the second leading cause of death of adults ages 35-44, and the sixth leading cause of death for adults ages 45-54; and

WHEREAS, more than three lives a day are lost to suicide in Tennessee, which means we lose 21 Tennesseans each week and 97 people per month; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee veterans, active-duty military, and National Guardsmen face a disproportionate risk compared to the general population, with more dying from suicide than combat; and

WHEREAS, public awareness of this tragic problem is the key to preventing further suffering and loss of life; and the risk for human self-destruction can be reduced through awareness, education and treatment, as the highest risk for suicide is among the survivors of those who died by suicide or those who have attempted suicide; and

WHEREAS, suicide prevention has been declared a state priority by the Governor, and the Tennessee Legislature has declared teen suicide prevention as a state priority in partnership with the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee is a national leader in the effort to prevent suicide, being one of the first states to develop a suicide prevention and evaluation plan covering the lifespan; and

WHEREAS, 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, along with prevention and crisis resources for individuals or their loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of Tennessee has appointed a Suicide Prevention Network Advisory Council to coordinate the implementation of the Tennessee Strategy for Suicide Prevention; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network is a grassroots collaboration of Tennesseans and organizations working to eliminate the stigma of suicide, educate the community about the warning signs of suicide, and ultimately reduce the rate of suicide in our state; and

WHEREAS, every member of our community should understand that throughout life's struggles, we need occasional reminders that we are all silently fighting our own battles; and

WHEREAS, Covenant Health's behavioral service line, including both inpatient and outpatient resources, will continue to serve all patient populations including those with psychiatric needs. Covenant Health commits the staff of Covenant HomeCare and Hospice to become zero-suicide certified and to hold additional staff training specific to suicide prevention as a crisis-response measure to save lives. The staff at Peninsula, a division of Parkwest Medical Center, has been zero-suicide certified since 2016.

WHEREAS, the health system is committed to actively participate in preventive training and to continue offering psychiatric services, peer support services, free grief support groups across our 25-county service area, ComPASS support groups for survivors of suicide loss, weekly inpatient post-discharge, and recognition of the annual Survivors of Suicide Loss day event, held each November at Parkwest Medical Center. Katerpillar Kids Camp, coordinated by Covenant Hospice and sponsored by Variety, the Children's Charity of Eastern Tennessee, is held annually for students K-12 who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Campers attend free of charge and learn healthy ways to cope with grief through activities including games, art, animal therapy, and recreation. Peninsula, a division of Parkwest Medical Center, and Covenant HomeCare are actively involved in the Knoxville Regional Veterans Mental Health Council and the Knox Area Mental Health Providers Coalition, initiatives working to improve care coordination for those in our community with mental health needs.

Now, therefore, we, the executive leadership team of Covenant Health, do hereby recognize September 2023 as

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

in Covenant Health's 25-county service area of East Tennessee, and do urge all citizens to work to prevent suicide and to help raise awareness and understanding for all people affected by this tragedy.

Jim VanderSteeg, President and Chief Executive Officer

*Jon-David Deeson, Executive Vice President of
Physician Enterprise and Ambulatory Services*

Mike Belbeck, Executive Vice President of Operations

*Joe Dolan, Executive Vice President and
Chief Financial Officer*

Doug Campbell, General Counsel

