

For Immediate Release

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New Report Shows Slight Decline Over Past Decade in Colorado's Suicide Rate; Overall, Rate Remains Above National Average

DENVER, Colo. May 5, 2009 – First Lady Jeannie Ritter, Mental Health America of Colorado and The Colorado Trust announce the release of a new report, *Preventing Suicide in Colorado – Progress Achieved & Goals for the Future*. The report is an update to the state's 1998 Suicide Prevention and Intervention Plan to address Colorado's historically high suicide rate, as well as The Trust's 2002 report *Suicide in Colorado*, which documented the problem of suicide across the state and identified suicide-prevention resources. The new report details key facts and figures about the suicide rate in Colorado, notable prevention achievements in the past 10 years and recommendations to strengthen current and future suicide prevention and awareness efforts.

The report shows that while Colorado's average suicide rate has declined by 6.5 percent in the past decade, our state still has the 6th highest suicide rate in the nation. Indeed, mortality statistics shows more lives are lost each year in Colorado to suicide – 805 – than in motor vehicle accidents or from illnesses such as diabetes, pneumonia or breast cancer. And sadly, suicide remains the second leading cause of death among teenagers and young adults in Colorado. The impact of lives lost is a social, emotional and economic burden for our state and its residents, and the loss of lives is preventable.

In addition to the updated research findings, *Preventing Suicide in Colorado – Progress Achieved & Goals for the Future* includes input from mental health professionals, consumers, researchers, suicide survivors and family members and others gathered through multiple community meetings, which were conducted in cities and towns across the state over the past two years. This community input shows that since 1998:

- Communities have developed stronger suicide prevention and awareness efforts and training;
- Education and information is reaching more diverse populations and in culturally appropriate ways;
- Suicide prevention partners are working together more closely and with other systems including mental health, substance abuse and primary care; and



- State policy changes have increased insurance coverage for mental health and substance abuse conditions.

While the report underscores the continuing, significant problem of suicide in Colorado, it also points to a growing base of increasingly-connected prevention efforts. To further strengthen these prevention efforts, the report offers a number of recommendations, including:

- Continue to develop the full potential of the Office of Suicide Prevention, the state agency dedicated to implementing and coordinating suicide prevention efforts;
- Address and support the needs of a growing Latino population, especially the high-risk age groups of single Latino working age men and teenage girls;
- Develop solutions to address limited access to mental health services in rural and mountain communities, as well as low-income populations in all areas of the state; and
- Better focus on special populations including veterans, the elderly and sexual minorities.

Preventing Suicide in Colorado – Progress Achieved & Goals for the Future will be released at a 2:00 p.m. community event at The Colorado Trust, 1600 Sherman Street, Denver, Colorado. Presenters include Colorado First Lady Jeannie Ritter, lead researcher Jean Demmler, PhD, Heartland Network for Social Research, Irene Ibarra, President and CEO of The Colorado Trust and Jeanne M. Rohner, President and CEO, Mental Health America of Colorado. For additional information, please contact Jacy Conradt by phone at 720-208-2234 or email jconradt@mhacolorado.org.

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INFORMATIONAL NOTE: The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention provides useful information on their website to reporters on how to appropriately cover the issue of suicide and suicide prevention – [Reporting on Suicide: Recommendations for the Media](#)