Shared Statement
September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Together, we raise awareness for suicide prevention and treatment, understand the risks and warning signs, and learn what to do in a crisis. Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, or background and have become more common during this unprecedented time. Learn the facts. Check on loved ones. Choose kindness.

Social Media Message Samples
These are very easy to create and put a face to the message. Below are examples from Northern Light Acadia Hospital providers and we can gather additional messages from our CHLB partnering organizations around risk factors for various populations.

Sara Porter, LCSW, at Northern Light Acadia Hospital, says that we shouldn’t wait until a crisis to talk to our kids about mental health. “Now is the time to regularly discuss anxiety, depression, and the challenges of the pandemic.” She adds that it’s important for youth to know that there is always hope and help is available 24/7.

Emily Yenco, LMSW-CC, at Northern Light Acadia Hospital, says some things to look for in a person considering suicide include feelings of helplessness, feeling like a burden to family and friends, and loss of interest in once-enjoyed activities or people. “Have open and direct conversations with the person you are concerned about. If the person is not able or willing to seek treatment immediately, help them come up with a plan for what they will do when they are feeling suicidal. Who will they contact? What will they do? Which hotlines are comfortable calling or texting? Having a plan for dealing with those emotions in the moment can prevent an impulsive act.”

Greg Bridges-Music, M Div., MPC, M HC, LCPC-C, at Northern Light Acadia Hospital, explains that risk for suicidal ideation and completion, are disproportionally high in minority groups and the warning signs can present differently in different people. For example, Greg says, “LGBTQ-identifying youth in Maine are 4 times as likely to attempt suicide.” He encourages adults to openly talk to youth about their feelings—without minimizing or catastrophizing what they are going through—and reach out for help.
Risk Factors

Risk factors include the following, but are not exclusive to:

- A family history of suicide
- Previous suicide attempts
- Isolation, feeling cut off from others
- Barriers to accessing mental health treatment
- Substance use
- Access to firearms
- A serious or chronic medical illness
- Gender identity and sexual orientation
  - Although more women than men attempt suicide, men are nearly 4x more likely to die by suicide
- A history of trauma or abuse
- Prolonged stress
- A recent tragedy or loss

Warning Signs

Suicidal behaviors are a psychiatric emergency. If you or a loved one starts to take any of these steps, seek immediate help from a health care provider or call 911.

- Comments such as, “Maybe it would be easier if I weren’t around” or “no one would miss me if I were gone.”
- Feelings of being a burden to those around them
- Lack of interest or talk of future plans
- Collecting and saving pills or buying a firearm
- Giving away possessions
- Tying up loose ends, like organizing personal papers or paying off debts
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior
- Withdrawal from friends, family and community
- Dramatic mood swings
- Self-harming behaviors
- Impulsive or reckless behavior
Suicide Prevention Awareness

How to help
Start by asking questions
- Talk openly and honestly. Don’t be afraid to ask questions like: “Do you feel like you may want to harm yourself?” or “Do you have a plan for how you would kill yourself?”
- Remember, asking about suicidal thoughts or actions won’t push someone into doing something self-destructive. Talking about feelings may reduce the risk of acting on suicidal feelings.
- Calmly ask simple and direct questions, like “Can I help you call your doctor?”
- Work with the individual to remove access to lethal means such as making a plan to store weapons or medications someplace safe and out of immediate access.

Get Help
- Don’t leave the person alone.
- Offer to stay with the person to get help whether by calling a crisis line or 911, or visiting the emergency department with the person.
- Listen without judgement and convey how much you care.
- Help the person come up with a plan for when these feelings arise in the future. Who will they contact? What will they do? Which hotlines are comfortable calling or texting? Having a plan for dealing with those emotions in the moment can prevent an impulsive act.

Resources
Non-crisis:
- Primary care provider
- School counselors
- College/University Mental Health/Wellness resources
- Workplace Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
- Maine 211
- The Maine Warmline: 1-866-771-9276 or 1-866-771-WARM
- Northern Light Acadia Hospital and other behavioral health providers

Crisis:
Maine 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-888-568-1112
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 (or online chat)
National Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
Veterans Crisis Line: Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, or text to 838255
Trevor Project LGBTQ Crisis Line: 1-866-488-7386 (online chat or text TREVOR to 1-202-304-1200)

Acadia CARES videos on adolescent suicide prevention
https://northernlighthhealth.org/Locations/Acadia-Hospital/Featured/Acadia-CARES/Youth-Suicide