



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

**LINDA LINGLE**  
GOVERNOR

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CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO M.D.  
DIRECTOR  
Phone: (808) 586-4410  
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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**STATEWIDE SUICIDE PREVENTION CONFERENCE OFFERS UNIQUE  
OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE BEST PRACTICES**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) will sponsor Hawai'i's first statewide suicide prevention conference, *Building a Safety Net – Getting Connected for Suicide Prevention*, on **Nov. 15-16** at the Hilton Waikiki Prince Kuhio Hotel. Co-sponsors of the conference are the Suicide Prevention Task Force, the Hawai'i Suicide Prevention, Education, Awareness, and Research (S.P.E.A.R) Foundation of American, HMSA, and the Rotary Club of Metropolitan Honolulu.

The conference is part of an ongoing collaborative effort to address a major public health challenge in the state. One person dies by suicide every three days in Hawai'i (123 per year), making this the second leading cause of injury death in the state. For every suicide, there are about 12 attempts. Hawai'i youth are at particularly high risk of suicide attempts compared with other states. Hawai'i has:

- The highest percent of high school students (17 percent) who reported “making a suicide plan” among 39 states reporting this data.
- The second highest percent of high school students (13 percent) who reported “attempted suicide” among 39 states reporting this data.
- The second highest percent of high school students (nearly 20 percent) who reported that they “seriously considered attempting suicide.”

(more)

“The conference goal is to bring together agencies, organizations, communities and individuals from across the state to increase their knowledge of suicide prevention best practices and ultimately, to reduce the incidence of suicide and suicide attempts in Hawai‘i,” said Health Director Chiyo-me Fukino, MD.

This first statewide suicide prevention conference offers a unique opportunity for participants to exchange information and resources locally and nationally. Being armed with knowledge and tools creates ways to approach suicide as a preventable public health challenge with realistic opportunities to save many lives. At the conference, there will also be a remembrance ceremony to honor those who have died by suicide.

Iris Bolton, MA, one of the featured national presenters, is the founder of Survivors of Suicide (SOS) support groups and author of *My Son, My Son*. After her son, Mitchell, died by suicide in 1977, Bolton, became active in many national and local suicide prevention agencies and is considered a pioneer in the field of suicide prevention and aftercare. She will speak on *Survivors Helping to Set the National Agenda*.

Other national speakers include Charles Curie, former head of the National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration who will address *Mental Health Services Transformation Equals Preventing Suicide*. Jerry Reed, executive director of the Suicide Prevention Action Network, will present *Suicide Prevention: A National and State Imperative*.

Local experts will also share their expertise within four broad categories: Raising Awareness, Call to Action, Resilience, and Promising Programs. Speakers from the DOH include Bill Sheehan, MD, medical director, Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD); Michael Rimm, MD, Maui Family Guidance Center; Kimo Alameda, PhD, psychologist, Big Island Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) ; Dan Galanis, epidemiologist, Injury Prevention Program (IPP) ; Art Tani, suicide prevention coordinator, (IPP); and Kathleen Rhoads Merriam, survivor, (AMHD).

The conference is open to professional health and social services workers, those affected by suicide, and the public. Conference details and registration information is posted on the Department of Health website at [www.hawaii.gov/health](http://www.hawaii.gov/health), and the Injury Prevention website at [www.nogethurt.hawaii.gov](http://www.nogethurt.hawaii.gov). For further information, call 586-5939.

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For more information, contact:  
Art Tani  
Suicide Prevention Coordinator  
Phone: (808) 586-5939

Janet Smith  
Communications Office  
(808) 586-4660