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AUDITOR GENERAL

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DePasquale Says Pennsylvania Must Make Students' Mental Health a Priority

HARRISBURG – In observance of World Mental Health Day, Auditor General Eugene DePasquale urged Pennsylvanians to take advantage of available mental health services and seek immediate help if facing a crisis.

The national Suicide Prevention Hotline number is 1-800-273-8255.

“A recent report by the federal Centers for Disease Control noted a stunning 34 percent increase in Pennsylvania’s suicide rate between 1999 and 2016,” DePasquale said. “Most troubling, suicide is the second leading cause of death among Pennsylvanians aged 15 to 34.”

DePasquale noted that the recent [Pennsylvania School Safety Task Force Report](#) identified a need to improve mental health services offered to younger Pennsylvanians.

“Six times, in six vastly different schools, students came forward to describe feelings of helplessness and anxiety about inadequate mental health services. It is our job to heed those concerns,” DePasquale said. “When it comes to the safety of Pennsylvania’s students, the importance of mental health cannot be overstated.”

Data from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention indicates that on average, one Pennsylvania resident dies from suicide every four hours. In addition, nearly three times as many people die each year of suicide than of homicide.

Health experts suggest that if you suspect someone is suicidal, speak to them in a private setting and take them to the Emergency Room immediately if they say that they are considering or planning self-harm.

For someone who is not in imminent danger, help them to make an appointment to see a mental health professional as soon as possible. Ask them not to act on any self-harm impulses before getting professional help.

To learn more, visit Prevent Suicide PA online at www.preventsuicidepa.org.

“I will continue to push to end the stigma placed on conversations about mental health,” DePasquale said. “Bringing these concerns out of the shadows and into the spotlight is the first step in building a safe space for all students.”

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