



## News Release

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### **Cape Cod Youth First in State to be Trained in CONNECT Peer-to-Peer Youth Suicide Prevention Training**

Bourne – Students from four area high schools and youth organizations on the Cape were trained recently to address youth suicide risk factors and prevention methods as part of the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) New Hampshire's Connect Project. This training was sponsored and funded by the Youth Suicide Prevention Project, a program of Community Health Center of Cape Cod

The training took place on March 12 at one of the Project's supportive community partners, Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay. Kathleen Shine-O'Brien, Assistant Director of Health Services at the Academy says, "This was an outstanding opportunity and program for young people to learn about suicide prevention".

In total, 23 youth aged 14-18 participated in the peer-to-peer suicide prevention training. They represented Falmouth, Mashpee and Sandwich High Schools, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School, and the Barnstable Youth Commission.

The CONNECT Suicide Prevention Training is designated a National Best Practice prevention program. Maura Weir, Manager of the Youth Suicide Prevention Project is enthused that young people from Cape Cod are the first in the state to be trained as peer trainers in this model. "This is great news for the suicide prevention movement on Cape Cod with this age group. We have made such strides since the Project started in July 2009," she says. Ms. Weir, who holds a Master's Degree in Youth Health and Education Management from the University of Melbourne, cites research that shows youth commonly turn to their friends for help. "It makes total sense to train this age group in suicide prevention because we know their friends turn to them and talk to them about stressful life events and confide in each other about their feelings on life issues. Early intervention is key," Ms. Weir notes. "If youth are trained to see the warning signs and know the appropriate resources and phone numbers, they may persuade their friends to seek help," she

continues, "This is quite an achievement for these youth trainers and provides a great example and positive message about how youth can contribute to their school communities at school and beyond."

Effie Purdy, who teaches health class at Mashpee High, brought 12 young people to participate in this very first training in the state. "These young people deserve credit for taking time out on their weekend to be trained in such a difficult subject for so many of their peers and in the community!", she says.

Adjustment counselor, Joanne Sykes, also brought 7 students from the Falmouth High School to the peer-to-peer training. Sykes comments, "These young people have done a brilliant job learning the warning signs and local resource numbers for the area. They will be of service to their peers."

Having completed the training, the youth are now the first CONNECT-certified youth trainers on Cape Cod and in the state of Massachusetts. These youth trainers will partner with adult facilitators and present the training to their peers in health classes, at youth centers, teen nights, church groups and wherever else youth gather. Adult facilitators who attended the weekend training included representatives from the YMCA, The Boys and Girls Club of Cape Cod, Family Support Project, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Cape Cod and the Islands, Hyannis Youth and Community Center, as well as Falmouth, Mashpee and Provincetown High Schools, Quashnet Middle School, and Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School.

For information about training in your community, group or organization, please contact Ms. Weir at [mweir@chcofcapecod.org](mailto:mweir@chcofcapecod.org) or contact the Health Center at 508-759-7971.

The Youth Suicide Prevention Project is a program of Community Health Center of Cape Cod and the Community Health Network of the Cape & Islands (CHNA 27) that trains the community to recognize young people at risk for suicide and intervene quickly.

If you or anyone you know needs help regarding suicide, please call the Samaritans at 1-800-893-9900 or 508-548-8900, or the DMH Crisis Line at 1-800-322-1356.

*Community Health Center of Cape Cod is a non-profit Federally Qualified Health Center that provides access to health care for adults and children with MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, Medicare, private insurance, or no insurance at all. Services include primary and preventive care, dental care, behavioral health, coordinated case management, and prescription assistance, at locations in Barnstable, Bourne, Falmouth, and Mashpee. Visit the Health Center online at [chcofcapecod.org](http://chcofcapecod.org)*

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