



NEWS RELEASE

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World Got You Down? There is Hope. There is Help.

Health and Human Services seeking to connect with those in distress

San Rafael, CA – Those who have felt isolated, frustrated, worried, or down during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) are not alone. Upwards of 45% of American adults reported that their mental health has been negatively affected by the public health emergency. It's no different in Marin County.

The [Marin County Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) has noted a spike in calls to its crisis hotline and to its specialists in the [Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Division](#) (BHRS). During September, which is [National Suicide Prevention and Recovery Month](#), the Marin HHS team and its community partners are especially eager to support those in distress.

On September 15, the Marin County Board of Supervisors [adopted a resolution](#) proclaiming September as Suicide Prevention and Recovery Month in Marin. It said, in part: "Social connectedness is a primary protective factor for suicide prevention and substance use disorders. Making just one connection puts the strength of family and community behind someone in need who is experiencing suicidality and helps promote health and wellness."

It's not just a pandemic that can spark a personal crisis in 2020. It can be related to shelter-in-place orders, household economic stress, unstable housing or homelessness, wildfires, bad air quality, the civil rights crisis, election season concerns, or any other factors that create a perfect storm. Paired with substance use disorder – whether its prescription medications, alcohol, or illicit drugs – those stress factors can lead to suicidal thoughts or risky actions.

Seniors may be especially vulnerable during this time. Marin has one of the highest populations of seniors among the California counties, and many live alone. Often older adults experience higher rates of suicide than other populations because of their frailty, isolation, hopelessness, and reluctance to ask for help. Older men and LGBTQ adults are at an even greater suicide risk.

The Marin HHS' [Aging and Adult Services Division](#) is helping people

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Contacts: Dr. Jei Africa

DIRECTOR
Behavioral Health
and Recovery Services
Department of Health
and Human Services

20 North San Pedro Road
San Rafael, CA 94903
415 473 6769 T
CRS Dial 711
jafrica@marincounty.org
[Behavioral Health webpage](#)

Kara Connors

SENIOR PROGRAM
COORDINATOR FOR
SUICIDE PREVENTION
Department of Health
and Human Services

10 North San Pedro Road
San Rafael, CA 94903
415 473 6088 T
CRS Dial 711
kconnors@marincounty.org
[Behavioral Health webpage](#)

identify and address signs of distress with more precision and confidence.

“With the right help, a vulnerable person can build a supportive safety net that can turn them around in tough times,” said Kara Connors, Marin HHS Senior Program Manager for Suicide Prevention. “Often it’s difficult, but focusing on the needs of the other person and asking directly, ‘Are you having thoughts of suicide?’ can be a life-saving move. We hope more people are willing to throw a lifeline by saying ‘I am here for you,’ listening without judgment and referring someone to safety. Each one of us can play a role in this important public health issue.”

Marin BHRS is always open. Any resident experiencing a mental health or substance use issue can call the 24-hour, confidential Access Line at 1-888-818-1115. Marin BHRS provides outpatient, residential, crisis services, and hospital care addressing specialty mental health and substance use service needs of Marin Medi-Cal beneficiaries and uninsured residents.

The Marin County Suicide Prevention Collaborative created a [Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan](#) with help from the Marin BHRS staff. Get involved by checking the BHRS [Community Events webpage](#), which during COVID-19 are mostly online gatherings.

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