

Mental Health Liaison Group

April 23, 2004

The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Dodd:

The undersigned organizations in the Mental Health Liaison Group are pleased to write in support of the Youth Suicide Early Intervention and Prevention Expansion Act (S. 2175).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide claims the lives of over 4,000 young persons each year, making it the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 10 and 24. In fact, more youth between the ages of 15 and 24 die from suicide each year than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke and chronic lung disease combined. Additionally, the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) has highlighted the widespread nature of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. In 2001, the YRBS reported that 19 percent of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide while 8.8 percent made an actual suicide attempt.

Of particular concern are the high suicide rates among racial and ethnic minorities. Adolescent American Indian/Alaska Native males are at four times the risk for suicide than are males of any other racial/ethnic group. In addition, 30.3 percent of Hispanic female high school students reported seriously considering suicide, the highest rate of any racial or ethnic group in the country.

We believe that this legislation has the potential to protect the lives of many young Americans. Its value lies in the fact that it not only supports the planning and implementation of youth suicide prevention strategies, but their evaluation, thereby contributing to the existing evidence base.

If enacted, this legislation will help meet Objective 18-1 and 18-2 of *Healthy People 2010*, Objective 1.1 of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health and several of the objectives set forth in the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*.

We commend you for your continued leadership in suicide prevention, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Peter Newbould, American Psychological Association Practice Organization, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002

American Association of Children's Residential Centers
American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Counseling Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Hospital Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychotherapy Association
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Child Welfare League of America
Clinical Social Work Federation
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders -- ANAD
National Association of County Behavioral Health Directors
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Coalition of Mental Health Consumers and Professionals
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Mental Health Association
National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse
Screening for Mental Health, Inc.
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA
Therapeutic Communities of America