

**State of Vermont**

Department of Mental Health  
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*Agency of Human Services*

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To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee  
From: Sarah Squirrell, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health  
Sarah Clark, CFO Agency of Human Services  
Re: **CRF Request for Suicide Prevention**  
Date: July 27, 2020

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**Total Amount Requested: \$500,000.** The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is seeking funding for suicide prevention efforts that will support Vermonters whose mental health has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific uses of the requested funds are detailed as follows:

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|---|-----------|
| 1. Expand ZERO SUICIDE statewide in Vermont                                   | \$300,000 |
| 2. Expand Vermont's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline                      | \$ 70,000 |
| 3. Develop targeted suicide prevention resources that are culturally informed | \$ 30,000 |
| 4. Expand Mental Health First Aid Training                                    | \$ 50,000 |
| 5. Expand programs and supports for older Vermonters                          | \$ 50,000 |

**Total CRF Request: \$500,000**

DMH applied for an Emergency SAMHSA Suicide Prevention grant, but learned on Tuesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, that Vermont was not awarded the SAMHSA grant. Because there is a critical need for immediately invest in suicide prevention efforts and in accordance with Act 136, Section 9, DMH is now requesting CRF funds from the Joint Fiscal Committee to support Vermonters.

**Response to the Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the well-being of Vermonters. It increased social isolation, increased unemployment, imposed significant economic stress on the population and placed additional stress on families and relationships. Vermont is a rural state with limited access to internet and technology in some regions, thereby limiting the ability to connect and use natural supports during this difficult time. Suicide prevention efforts will support Vermonters by increasing access to mental health services and resources, broadening the use of evidence-based practices for identifying and treating suicidality, and fostering partnerships with those supporting at risk populations.

**Urgency of Request:** There is a need for funding to support suicide prevention that cannot wait until the appropriations process. It is critical to invest in these important suicide prevention efforts as soon as possible to ensure the health and wellness of Vermonters as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

