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## **Mental Health Receives Youth Suicide Prevention Grant**

Columbia, SC – The South Carolina Department of Mental Health (DMH) has received a youth suicide prevention grant of \$736,000 per year for five years from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA). The award, which will begin September 30, 2015, will support the Young Lives Matter Project (YLM), an intensive community-based effort with a goal of reducing suicide among youths and young adults, aged 10 to 24, by 20% statewide by 2025.

“We are pleased to announce the launch of this project on World Suicide Prevention Day,” said DMH Deputy Director and Community Mental Health Services Director Geoffrey J. Mason. “This initiative involves partnerships between our Agency and the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention–SC](#), [Mental Health America–SC](#), the [Federation of Families–SC](#), the [National Alliance on Mental Illness–SC](#), and others. It is a community response to a community problem.”

YLM will focus on increasing access to screening and mental health services for youths and young adults; raising awareness through social media marketing; providing suicide prevention programming in 80 school districts and on five college campuses; and increasing protective factors by training teachers, parents, peers, guidance counselors and others on recognizing suicide risks and where to get help for depression and other mental health issues. Other goals of the initiative include development of interagency protocols in the event that a youth or young adult is determined to be at risk of suicide; support for clinicians and educators in implementing evidence-based interventions; and training for emergency department staff on suicide means restrictions.

“The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention congratulates the Department of Mental Health on this important award,” said SC Area Director for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Helen Pridgen. “We look forward to the work of this collaboration with DMH and other organizations so that no more young lives are lost to suicide in South Carolina. We commend and fully support the Young Lives Matter project.”

“Our goal is to reach 300,000 youth and young adults via social media marketing and screen 30,000 youth and young adults for suicide risk and mental health needs over the next 5 years,” Mason continued. “We know that the involvement of parents, peers, teachers, guidance counselors, and advocates, along with Mental Health professionals, is key to meeting this goal; for this reason, we are building a coalition of support to reach South Carolina’s young people in need.”

The [South Carolina Department of Mental Health’s](#) mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses, giving priority to adults with serious and persistent mental illness and to children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. The Agency serves approximately 100,000 citizens with mental illnesses, approximately 30,000 of whom are children and adolescents, and provides outpatient services through a network of 17 community mental health centers and numerous clinics. It also operates four hospitals, one community nursing care center, and three veterans’ nursing homes.