

## September 14, 2022

September is National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month. It is a time for us all to come together and prioritize the health and safety of our agency's staff, the adults and youth in DOC's care, clients on supervision and the victims we serve.

According to the Center for Disease Control, in 2020, 45,979 individuals died by suicide in the United States. That is 1 death every 11 minutes. Even more concerning, 1.2 million adults attempted suicide, 3.2 million adults made a plan and 12.2 million adults seriously considered it. These numbers are staggering and showcase the immense struggles so many people are going through, often in silence. It also highlights the importance of us each doing our part to reduce the stigma related to mental health and to get folks the help they need.

Suicide can occur among our colleagues, the individuals we interact with or even the individuals under our care. In fact, individuals who are incarcerated are at much higher risk compared to the general population. Some contributing factors include trauma, mental illness, substance use, loss of social support and loss of family. It's why our agency works hard to ensure all our staff are trained annually to recognize the warning signs and seek out help, as this can be the key to reducing the risk.

I am also proud of the efforts within our agency to ensure our staff have the resources they need to prioritize health and wellness. The work we do in corrections is tough and it takes continuous, intentional, and thoughtful effort to keep others safe. This is why, just last month, we held a town hall event outlining the employee resources available for our staff.

There are several ways individuals can seek assistance. The first step should always be to speak up and ask for assistance when you need it or when you see warning signs in others. Staff can contact their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or work with their healthcare provider to set up a behavioral health appointment. EAP is a no-cost, confidential resource to assist staff and their family and can be accessed at [sowi.mylifeexpert.com](https://sowi.mylifeexpert.com).

For more urgent matters, or if someone is in crisis, get help immediately or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by dialing 988. To understand more of the warning signs, please visit the **[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)**.

Thank you, and be safe.

Secretary Kevin A. Carr