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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

To: Local Media and Press Release Subscribers
From: Katrina Harwood, Health Officer
Date: October 3, 2023

October 10 is World Mental Health Day

ROCK COUNTY, WI – World Mental Health Day raises awareness and drives positive change for everyone’s mental health.

The [Health Equity Alliance of Rock County \(HEAR\)](#) and the Rock County Public Health Department (RCPHD) recognize that mental health can be a struggle for many. Things like stigma, limited providers, and low mental health literacy can impact a person’s ability to get screened for mental health. From the [2021 Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#), mental health was identified as a top priority for the [2022-2024 Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#).

More specifically, the mental health of Rock County youth needs our attention. During RCPHD’s annual data review, a [2021 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance](#) survey of Rock County’s middle and high school students showed the following:

- **More than half** of students reported symptoms of **anxiety**,
- **One third** of students reported symptoms of **depression**, and
- Around **one-fifth** of students (20% for middle schoolers, 16% for high schoolers) reported having **seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months**.

For females, these numbers are higher than the overall rates. Since the last survey in 2019, there has been a **7% increase** in middle school girls reporting **intentionally harming themselves, raising the score to 36%**.

While the numbers above are staggering, there are many ways to support youth and their mental health. RCPHD and HEAR works with businesses, community organizations, schools, and others to promote mental health wellness.

RCPHD also works with Rock County schools to assess their wellness policies which ensure they support an environment of health and well-being. HEAR works with community partners to host suicide prevention training called Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR).

These hour-and-a-half sessions can be held for youth and adults to learn more about mental health and resources to help in a crisis. HEAR is also hosting mini-grant applications to pilot walking school buses at schools. This helps to give youth more opportunities to connect with a supportive adult while getting exercise at the same time.

How can you support mental health well-being for yourself and others?

- **Sleep:** Model healthy sleeping habits and get enough sleep. When you get enough sleep, you can cope better with stress.
- **Nutrition:** Eat a variety of foods throughout the day to support a healthy body and mind. Food is the best source of the nutrients and vitamins to support your mood.
- **Physical Activity:** Moving your body can help relieve stress. Take five-minute breaks to stretch and move throughout the day.
- **Problem Solving:** Having the skills to navigate stressful situations can promote resiliency.
- **Connect with Others:** Participating in group activities, having supportive relationships, and talking with trusted people about how you are doing can prevent someone from developing or worsening mental health symptoms. Something as simple as unplugging from your devices and sharing a meal together can help you connect.

Help is available! If you or someone you know is in a state of emergency, call, text, or chat with [988 Lifeline](#). The Lifeline connects callers with trained counselors for free, confidential emotional support, crisis counseling to people in distress, and can provide resources. To learn more about building your own mental health toolkit of resources, or for any questions on what HEAR and RCPHD are doing, please contact the HEAR Coordinator at HEARCoordinator@co.rock.wi.us.

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Rock County Public Health Department serves Rock County residents by improving population health outcomes and removing barriers through community partnerships to provide everyone the opportunity to reach their full health potential. Visit the Rock County Public Health Department [website](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Please send all media inquiries to:

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