Local Health Department Gets $375,000 Suicide Prevention Grant

Lewis and Clark Public Health has received a $375,000 federal grant to help prevent suicide in the county.

The health department will use the money to hire a suicide prevention coordinator who will work with local school officials, law enforcement and emergency responders, medical providers, parents, coaches, church leaders, business leaders, and the Montana National Guard to identify and respond to mental-health needs in the community.

The 3-year grant was awarded this month by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Among the projects it will fund are trainings in:

• Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR): three simple steps that anyone can use to help save a life from suicide;
• Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): stressful and traumatic events that are strongly related to the development of health problems throughout life;
• Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST): a two-day course that gives caregivers skills to provide “suicide first aid;”
• The use of gun locks to limit access to firearms, the most common means of suicide in Lewis and Clark County;
• How to spot the signs that someone might be contemplating suicide; and
• How to find resources to help someone who is suicidal.

“It’s no secret that our community has been impacted by suicide,” said Jacqueline Isaly, administrator of the health department’s Community Health Promotion Division and a member of the Lewis and Clark Suicide Prevention Coalition. “Mental health and wellbeing is something that we need to get more comfortable talking about.

“We’re grateful for this funding so that we can approach suicide prevention in a more systematic way,” she added. “It’s going to take the whole community to make a difference. That’s why our focus is to educate and train people in our community -- so that we’re all better able to recognize signs that someone is struggling and have the skills and confidence to link people to support when they need it.”