

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists
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Suicide prevention requires us to spend 40 seconds on 10 October

Pretoria: South Africa joins the global community to observe and commemorate World Mental Health Day on the 10th October. South Africa has dedicated the whole month of October to raising awareness on mental health and suicide prevention under the theme: Suicide Prevention.

The focus will be to highlight the importance of mental health and to raise awareness of what can be done to prevent suicide related deaths. According to the World Health Organization, one person dies by suicide every 40 seconds – globally – and this makes suicide the second leading cause of death, especially among people between 15-29 years old. A “40 seconds of action” campaign has been adopted as a call to action to increase awareness about suicide and the roles individuals and communities can play in preventing suicide related deaths.

The Department of Health in collaboration with various mental health organisations including SA Federation of Mental Health, the SA Depression and Anxiety Group and Lifeline will use the #40seconds campaign to educate the public about mental health to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and to improve the knowledge of what can be done to prevent suicides.

Suicide affects people of all races and age groups in all countries, but they are preventable. As stakeholders working in the field of mental health, we call upon every individual, family, community and organisation to join the #40seconds campaign by taking at least “40 seconds of action” during the October month to help us:

- Increase awareness on the significance of suicide as a public health issue;
- Increase knowledge of what can be done to prevent suicide;
- Reduce the stigma associated with suicide and mental illness; and
- Reach out to people who are struggling to let them know that they are not alone.

What can we do in 40 seconds? Start a conversation – make a kind gesture to someone who looks under stress; comfort someone who has suffered a recent loss of a loved one or their job or going through any difficult situation; all someone may need is a good listener that they can talk to.

We call for open and honest dialogue on suicide and other mental health issues at all levels of society and improved support for people to prevent suicide-associated deaths.

For free counselling, please call:

- Lifeline National Counselling Line - 0800 150 150
- Suicide Crisis Line – 0800 567 567
- SADAG Mental Health Line – 011 234 4837
- AIDS Helpline - 0800 012 322

For enquiries and more information, please contact:

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