



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WETA WELLBEINGS.ORG AND ALASKA PUBLIC MEDIA TO HOST VIRTUAL EVENT ON PREVENTING YOUTH SUICIDE IN ALASKA

Live-streamed panel discussion will feature local mental health experts, innovative community leaders and students on the topic of youth mental health

The major national campaign from public media Well Beings Youth Mental Health Project makes fifth tour stop in Anchorage

On November 17 at 5pm AKST, [Well Beings Youth Mental Health Project](http://WellBeingsYouthMentalHealthProject.org) and [Alaska Public Media](http://AlaskaPublicMedia.org) will stream a live virtual panel discussion featuring local experts and youth on preventing suicide in Alaska. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and Alaska has one of the highest rates of suicide per capita in the country.

"First it's important to recognize that we are in a crisis. Suicide is THE leading cause of death among Alaskans aged 10-24 and, according to the 2019 AK Youth Risk Behavior Survey, there have been significant increases in students feeling sad or hopeless, and considering, planning and attempting suicide," said Jason Lessard, Executive Director, NAMI Anchorage. "But it's also important to recognize that suicide is preventable and that there are many programs out there right now that are saving lives. Programs focusing on both pre- and post-vention, crisis call centers, and school outreach have all been successful in prevention work."

The conversation will bring together community-based interventions, counselors and adolescents to address preventing youth suicide in Alaska, focusing on innovations and insights from those who have struggled with mental health and been impacted by suicide. The interactive event will also offer support for mental wellness, especially for Alaska's young people. The goal of the event is to raise awareness about risk factors and conditions that contribute to suicide, and assist with early interventions that are proven to save lives.

What: **Well Beings** and **Alaska Public Media**, with collaboration and sharing from local partners including NAMI Anchorage, Connect Mat Su, Mat-Su Health Foundation, Alaska Humanities Forum, Spirit of Youth, Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Anchorage School District, and Alaska Mental Health Foundation will host a free virtual event and live panel discussion entitled "Preventing Youth Suicide in Alaska: There's Hope, There's Help". The event will also include short videos sharing voices across Alaska on this topic. The 90-minute digital event will be configured as a special one-hour episode of "[Alaska Insight](http://AlaskaInsight.org)", which will broadcast on Friday, November 20 at 6:30 p.m. on Alaska Public Media TV (KAKM Ch.7) and on Friday at 10 p.m. and Saturday, November 21 at 6 p.m. KTOO's 360 North..

Who: Hosted by Lori Townsend, News Director at Alaska Public Media, featuring panelists, including:

- Kelvin Pace, Licensed Professional Counselor and Owner at KpaceCounseling, LLC
- Claire Rhyneer, Senior at West High and participant in Mental Health Advocacy Through Storytelling
- Justin Pendergrass, Suicide Prevention Specialist at My House Mat-Su Homeless Center
- Cynthia Erickson, Founder at My Grandma's House in Tanana



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When: Tuesday, November 17
5:00PM AKST (Alaska Standard Time)

Where: WellBeings.org/alaskapublic

About: Alaska Public Media and Well Beings team up for a community conversation about preventing youth suicide in a state with one of the highest per capita rates in the nation. Healing from the contributing factors facing young Alaskans is strengthened by knowledge and tapping into resources. Focusing on innovations, insights and deep listening to those who have struggled with and offer support for mental wellness, this interactive event offers hope and help.

Well Beings is a multi-platform, multi-year campaign from public media to address the critical health needs in America through original broadcast and digital content, engagement campaigns, and impactful local events. The campaign begins with the **Youth Mental Health Project**, engaging youth voices to create a national conversation, raise awareness, address stigma and discrimination, and encourage compassion. Well Beings was created by WETA Washington, D.C., the flagship public media station in the nation's capital, and brings together partners from across the country, including youth with lived experience, families, caregivers, teachers, medical and mental health professionals, social service agencies, private foundations, filmmakers, corporations and media sponsors, to create awareness and resources for better health and wellbeing.

Alaska Public Media harnesses the power of multiple media platforms to make a more informed and connected life possible for all Alaskans. Alaska Public Media produces and presents news and content that provides lifelong learning opportunities in public affairs, health and leisure, science and nature, economic and social development, civic engagement and world events. The company is located in Southcentral Alaska and is comprised of KSKA radio, KAKM-TV, Create TV, PBS KIDS 24/7, the AKPM App and alaskapublic.org. Alaska Public Media also operates the Statewide News and a shared television service with KTOO in Juneau and KYUK in Bethel. Alaska Public Media and its affiliates deliver content that reaches 97% of the population of Alaska.

SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES: If you are thinking about suicide, or are worried about someone who might be, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or Stop Suicide Alaska at 1-877-266-HELP.

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