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## **South Dakota Stands United During Suicide Prevention Month**

PIERRE, SD - September marks a significant time in South Dakota as the state comes together to commemorate Suicide Prevention Month. This month-long observance serves as reminder to our community and its collective responsibility to foster understanding, compassion and support for those struggling with suicidal thoughts and mental health challenges.

This effort, organized by the South Dakota Department of Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health, aims to raise awareness, destigmatize conversations around suicide and provide resources for those in need. The division's latest campaign, "Notes to Self," is here to support suicide prevention by addressing mental health openly through honest conversations and sharing encouraging "notes" with those who struggle.

In 2021, 202 South Dakotans died from suicide – that's more than deaths from vehicle crashes or drug overdoses. Suicide affects individuals of all ages and ethnicities across the state.

"Despite being an incredibly important topic, conversations about mental health aren't as common as they should be," says Janet Kittams, CEO of the Helpline Center. "By promoting Suicide Prevention Month, we aim to encourage conversation, help familiarize the public about the 988 Lifeline and create actionable change."

The 988 Lifeline has been instrumental in providing immediate support and resources to those seeking behavioral health help. As mental health awareness continues to grow, the introduction of 988 represents a crucial step towards breaking down barriers and offering local, accessible assistance to individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts or emotional distress.

For more information about suicide prevention, please visit [SDSuicidePrevention.org](https://SDSuicidePrevention.org) or [SDBehavioralHealth.gov](https://SDBehavioralHealth.gov).

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