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HEALTH
DEPARTMENT
of Northwest Michigan

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Health Department awarded grant for Youth Mental Health First Aid

PETOSKEY – The Health Department of Northwest Michigan has been awarded a three -year Project AWARE grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to support the training of a diverse group of adults in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA). This training will help adults detect and respond to mental health needs in youth in Charlevoix, Emmet, and northern Antrim counties.

YMHFA is a public education program that introduces participants to the risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems and builds an understanding of the importance of early intervention. Participants are familiarized with local mental health resources, national organizations, support groups, and online tools for mental health and addictions treatment and support.

“When a youth is struggling with depression, anxiety, trauma, or other mental conditions, sometimes adults are not sure what to do or how to respond,” said project coordinator Natalie Kasiborski, PhD, LMSW, MPH. “This program will give trusted adults like parents, teachers, coaches, business and community members the skills to respond to youth in crisis.”

By implementing YMHFA, the Health Department expects to see an increase in the mental health literacy of adults who interact with youth and to increase awareness of mental health issues among school-age youth. Kasiborski also notes these skills can be applied anytime, anywhere, and to anyone in distress.

Additionally, the grant will help fund the Char-Em Youth Behavioral Health Collaborative, of which the Health Department is a member. The Collaborative’s goal is to build a strong community system that supports the overall social, emotional and mental health needs of youth. With the grant, the Health Department will coordinate this group of community partners and add a dedicated staff member.

“The Char-Em Youth Behavioral Health Collaborative is an invaluable resource for our communities,” said Diane Heinzelman, Collaborative member and Director of Special Education for Char-Em Intermediate School District. “While the Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings are increasing the ability of adults to respond directly to youth in need, at the Collaborative level we’re also working to identify and eliminate system and policy issues that may be barriers to connecting youth with appropriate resources.”

The overall goal of SAMHSA’s Project AWARE (which stands for “Advancing Wellness and Resilience Education”) is to improve behavioral health awareness among school-age youth and their communities.

For more information on the Health Department’s Project AWARE grant, programs, and services, contact Natalie Kasiborski at **(231) 347-5144**. The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties.

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Cutlines (Photos by Chris Leese):

CharEm Group.jpg: Members of the Char-Em Youth Collaborative include (back row from left) Shelby Richardson, Tory Thrush, Ben Hicks, Gail Kloss, Cynthia Statler, MD, Natalie Kasiborski, Diane Heinzelman, (front row from left) Jonathon Wilcox, Christine Gebhard, Megan Cole, and Maureen Hollocker.

CharEm Meeting.jpg: The Char-Em Youth Collaborative discusses how to best meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of local youth. The three-year Project AWARE grant awarded to the Health Department will help fund the Collaborative.