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## State gets \$1.5M grant for suicide prevention

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Thirty-four young people killed themselves in Nebraska in 2007.

Eighteen of them were younger than 20, including three younger than 15.

Nebraska's youth suicide rate in 2006 for people ages 10 to 24 was quite a bit higher than the national rate and placed Nebraska in the top one-third of states.

There is not a single reason the rate is so high, but many reasons coming together, said Denise Bulling, senior research director with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

Suicide was the second leading cause of death for Nebraska teenagers ages 15 to 19 in 2006, she said.

That's why it was good news for Scot Adams, state director of behavioral health, to find out recently the state will receive \$1.5 million over the next three years in federal grant money to bring awareness to and decrease suicide among young people.

Lancaster County, which recorded six suicides among kids 10 to 19 in 2006 and five in 2007, will get some of the money, in part through Region V Behavioral Health Services.

The suicide prevention project will aim to help those youths at particularly high risk. They include kids with challenges and troubles such as mental health problems and those in the child welfare system, Adams said.

Also included are minority youths and young adults, especially those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their families.

The grant will help the state screen higher-risk youths and train behavioral health providers to treat youths and young returning veterans at risk for suicide, and provide local support for veterans and their families.

It also will help train intervention specialists to recognize and respond to signs that youths are suicidal, and it will help emergency room personnel implement life-saving practices for youths.

Bulling said the state will use interventions that have been evaluated and found to reduce suicidal

behaviors or risks.

The grant will expand on efforts among schools, law enforcement and mental health practitioners already going on across the state to reduce the number of suicides, Adams said.

In part, he said, the grant will help respond to behavioral health needs the state saw last year resulting from the use of the safe haven law, he said.

The grant is from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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