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Oct. 25, 2017

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Avera's Zero Suicide Initiative Yields Encouraging Results

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (Oct. 25, 2017) – Avera Health is evaluating positive outcomes of its robust and direct role in the national Zero Suicide Initiative, which started in July 2016.

Avera health care professionals are integrating behavioral health care into more aspects of overall care, using a quality improvement framework modeled on the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's 2012 key concept, Zero Suicide. That program, which Avera initially implemented in its behavioral health inpatient units, seeks to engage more health care systems to enhance commitments to patient safety and to the safety and support of clinical staff that treat those patients.

Matthew Stanley, DO, Vice President for Avera's Behavioral Health Clinical Service Line, said the first-year results are promising and that it's just a beginning. This includes:

- A 97-percent decrease system-wide in suicide attempts with patients who received Avera in-patient behavioral health care anywhere in our system after a documented suicide event
- A 98-percent decrease in emergency room visits from individuals who have had inpatient behavioral health care in Sioux Falls, Aberdeen and Marshall
- A 92-percent decrease in repeat behavioral health assessments from individuals who were previously seen as behavioral health inpatients system-wide

"This gives us hope we can continue to improve our approaches and make an impact in the scourge of suicide in our region," Stanley said.

Avera looks to expand behavioral health support for its many providers across its system and beyond, through the use of coordinated care specific to behavioral health as well as its innovative telemedicine resources, including Avera eCARE® and the smartphone/tablet application, AveraNow. Psychiatric medication consults, genetic testing and triage therapy are additional approaches that Avera is applying to stave the "silent epidemic" of suicide in the United States.

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S., and nearly 45,000 people die from it each year. In the last 15 years, the rate of suicide has increased almost 25 percent.

"Avera's focus is multi-faceted and much of our effort revolves around better screening to identify patients who might be at risk, as well as early intervention and enhanced access to treatment services," said Stanley. "We are meeting patients where they are since many people

who complete suicide see a health provider in the month before their death. We are managing patients as a whole, and applying approaches that address behavioral health challenges as well as physical and spiritual maladies.”

Learn more about the Zero Suicide online, and learn more about Avera’s behavioral health services at [Avera.org/services/behavioral-health/behavioral-health-education/](https://www.avera.org/services/behavioral-health/behavioral-health-education/).

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<http://zerosuicide.sprc.org/>

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