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DIGITAL PRESS KIT

Didi Hirsch Champions 'One Step at a Time' Approach to Suicide Prevention During National Awareness Month

*With One Suicide Death Occurring Every 11 Minutes in the U.S.,
Together, We Can Make a Life-Saving Difference*

World Suicide Prevention Day is Tuesday, September 10

CULVER CITY, Calif. – Sept. 3, 2024 – This National Suicide Prevention Month, [Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services](#) (Didi Hirsch) is reminding us to take 'One Step at a Time,' highlighting how small, deliberate actions can make a significant impact in preventing suicide and supporting mental health, both for ourselves and our loved ones. Didi Hirsch is home to the nation's first and most comprehensive Suicide Prevention Center and is a leader in providing suicide-specialized services and quality, compassionate care for all ages.

Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death in the United States, with nearly 50,000 lives lost in 2022 alone. Data from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) reveals that suicide rates have been increasing in the U.S., with one person dying by suicide every 11 minutes. These statistics underscore the urgency of comprehensive suicide prevention efforts.

"Suicide is a deeply complex issue that touches every community, but we all have the power to take meaningful steps to support suicide prevention," said Lyn Morris, LMFT, CEO of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services. "We understand that reaching out for help or starting a conversation can take courage and strength, especially given the stigma surrounding mental health. Even a single act of kindness, such as checking in with a friend or loved one or encouraging them to reach out to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, can have a profound impact. We encourage everyone to take that first, important step."

Steps to Support Mental Health and Prevent Suicide

While the path to prevention is not linear, Didi Hirsch emphasizes that compassion, judgment-free listening and awareness of mental health resources can help us take the first steps to support someone who may be struggling.

- **Step Up: Ask About Suicide** – Choose a private and safe space. Share your concern in a non-judgmental way. Ask direct questions like, "Are you thinking about suicide?"
- **Step In: Listen Attentively** – Listen without judgment and with empathy and respect. Validate their feelings by acknowledging their pain.
- **Step to Safety: Develop a Safety Plan** – Work together to establish an immediate safety plan to keep them safe.



- **Step Forward: Encourage Professional Help** – Guide them to professional help:
 - o Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center (www.crisiscare.org)
 - o The 24/7 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available for those seeking support for themselves or someone in their life
 - o Peer-to-peer support for teens through the Teen Line at (800) 852-8336 (6 p.m. – 10 p.m. PST) or by texting TEEN to 839863 (6 p.m. – 9 p.m. PST)
- **Step By Step: Follow Up Regularly** – Regularly check in to offer ongoing support.

Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Services Provided by Didi Hirsch

Didi Hirsch expands access to critical suicide prevention services, especially for historically underserved communities, through 24/7 crisis lines, specialized outpatient therapy, peer-led support groups and collaborative research partnerships. California's 988 Crisis Center Consortium, of which Didi Hirsch is a member, saw a 25% increase in calls and contacts via text more than doubled within the past year, highlighting the growing demand for comprehensive behavioral health and crisis services. Between 2022 and 2023, Didi Hirsch also significantly expanded access to individual counseling, more than tripling the number of clients receiving personalized support. In 2023, the organization's crisis lines assisted nearly 194,000 individuals, and its suicide prevention trainings and outreach events reached an additional 58,000 people. After completing Didi Hirsch's suicide prevention training, 95% of participants report feeling more confident in their ability to support others experiencing suicidal thoughts, and 91% indicate a better understanding of the warning signs.

The Suicide Prevention Counseling Center is a vital component of Didi Hirsch's services, providing both individual and group therapy tailored to diverse needs, including specialized programs for first responders, healthcare workers and caregivers. Group therapy sessions, such as the Survivors After Suicide and Survivors of Suicide Attempts support groups, are co-facilitated by licensed clinicians and peers with lived experience, ensuring that participants benefit from both expert guidance and empathetic understanding. Didi Hirsch's pioneering model for support groups for Survivors of Suicide Attempts is used internationally, with its curriculum manual being downloaded 3,112 times across 58 countries in 2023. Preliminary data from a 2018 study indicate that these support groups effectively reduce symptoms of depression and feelings of burdensomeness while enhancing social support and resilience.

"What sets Didi Hirsch apart is our comprehensive, compassionate approach at the Suicide Prevention Counseling Center. As the first Suicide Prevention Center in the United States, we have worked with hundreds of thousands of individuals who have struggled with suicide, and our counselors are very comfortable speaking to people about this topic," said Shari Sinwelski, MS/EdS, LPCC, NCC, Vice President of Crisis Care at Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services. "We provide tailored support that meets individuals wherever they are on their journey, offering specialized services in bereavement, suicide prevention, crisis care and ongoing treatment for both teens and adults. Our team is with you every step of the way."

Expanding Services to Meet the Moment

As a leader in suicide prevention and crisis care for all ages, Didi Hirsch's services are responsive to the growing needs of its communities. A recent CDC [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) showed that the youth mental health crisis persists, with girls and LGBTQ+ youth disproportionately impacted. [Teen Line](#), Didi Hirsch's peer-to-peer youth-led hotline, connects youth from across the United States (and even the



world) to highly trained, compassionate Teen Listeners who provide support, validation and connection to resources. In 2023, Teen Line Listeners provided more than 8,000 teens with support through calls, texts and emails. Recognizing the important roles schools play in supporting youth mental health, the Teen Line Teacher Facilitation Guide also reached 156 schools and over 25,000 (25,175) youth last year.

A Collective Effort

Recognizing that suicide prevention requires a community-wide effort, Didi Hirsch continues to train thousands of students, teachers, mental health professionals, law enforcement officers and first responders to recognize and respond to signs of suicide. They will be hosting the 26th annual "Alive Together: Uniting to Prevent Suicide" community building event and 5K walk/run at the University of California, Los Angeles campus on September 29, benefiting Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center. Grounded in the importance of connection and support, "Alive Together" will honor lives lost to suicide, pay tribute to survivors who have struggled with suicidal ideation and bring helpful resources to the community.

By taking "One Step at a Time," together we can create an environment where people feel supported, understood and less alone. For more information on suicide prevention resources or to find out how you can get involved, visit www.crisiscare.org.

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About Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Southern California, has been a national leader in mental health, crisis care and substance use services for more than 80 years. As a pioneer in suicide prevention and crisis care for all ages, Didi Hirsch is home to the nation's first and most comprehensive Suicide Prevention Center. Didi Hirsch is the largest crisis center for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in California and one of the largest centers in the U.S. Didi Hirsch also operates Teen Line, the leading youth peer-to-peer hotline, and partners with the Los Angeles Police Department to divert mental health crisis calls from 911. The Suicide Prevention Center serves as a model of care internationally and provides outpatient therapy and crisis counseling, support groups for survivors of suicide loss and suicide attempts and suicide prevention training for the community. Learn more at www.didihirsch.org.