



Vilas County Public Health Department

Physical Address: 302 West Pine Street

Mailing Address: 330 Court Street • Eagle River, WI 54521

715-479-3656 • 866-845-2726 • Fax: 715-479-3741



For Immediate Release: May 4, 2017

Contact: Tammi Boers, Vilas County Public Health Department: taboer@co.vilas.wi.us

May is Mental Health Month

When you or someone you love is dealing with a mental health concern, sometimes it's a lot to handle. It's important to remember that mental health is necessary to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. Yet, people experience symptoms of mental illnesses differently. Sometimes people get involved in dangerous or risky behaviors to avoid or cover up symptoms of a possible mental health problem.

May is Mental Health Month and this year's theme is "Risky Business". The focus is to educate ourselves and others about habits and behaviors that increase the chance of developing or make the mental illness worse, or could be signs of mental health problems themselves. Activities like compulsive sex, recreational drug use, obsessive internet use, excessive spending, or disordered exercise patterns can all be behaviors that can disrupt someone's mental health and possibly lead them down a path towards crisis.

"It is important to understand early symptoms of mental illness and know when certain behaviors are potentially signs of something more," said Heidi Karns, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Ministry Medical Group-Part of Ascension. Jason Dailey, Assistant County Veterans Service Officer for Oneida County, added, "One of the important things to remember with mental health conditions that stem from a particular or group of traumatic events is not that you feel this way because you are weak, but because you have gone through or dealt with something that is hard. Taking the steps to help improve things is showing how strong you really are."

"We need to speak up early and educate people about risky behavior and how it may connect to mental illness and do so in a compassionate, judgement-free way," added Mary Rudis, School District of Rhinelander School Social Worker.

Ministry Medical Group and Rhinelander School District are part of a work group that focuses on suicide prevention and decreasing mental health stigma. The group is made up of community partners that include school districts, healthcare, private mental health providers, veteran's services, UW-Extension and local health departments. It is also a subset of the tri-county (Forest, Oneida and Vilas) coalition that addresses mental

The mission of the Vilas County Public Health Department is to promote health, protect the environment, and prevent disease and injury.

health and alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) called Northwood's COPE (Community, Outreach, Prevention, Education) Coalition.

If you are interested in joining the work group or hosting a suicide prevention training called Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), please contact Tammi Boers, Community Health Coordinator, Vilas County Public Health Department at 715-479-3757 or taboer@co.vilas.wi.us.

For more information on May is Mental Health Month, visit Mental Health America's website at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may.

The mission of the Vilas County Public Health Department is to promote health, protect the environment, and prevent disease and injury.

###

The mission of the Vilas County Public Health Department is to promote health, protect the environment, and prevent disease and injury.