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Groundbreaking Action Alliance Guidelines Present Effective Ways Communities Should Respond to Impact of Suicide Loss

Atlanta -- A National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) landmark report will be introduced today at the American Association of Suicidology Annual Conference in Atlanta. The report, [*Responding to Grief, Trauma, and Distress After a Suicide: U.S. National Guidelines*](#), is the first-ever comprehensive, strategic document outlining how communities can effectively respond to the devastating impact of suicide loss. The *National Guidelines*, developed by the Action Alliance's Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL) Task Force, pave the way for decisive advances in postvention services, including support for the bereaved after a suicide. They issue a call to action to strengthen and expand care to meet the needs of the bereaved and others who suffer from the effects of suicide loss.

"The *National Guidelines* provide a unified, far-reaching blueprint for the development of suicide postvention at all levels of U.S. society," said Karen Moyer, SOSL Task Force Co-Lead and Founder of the Moyer Foundation and Camp Erin, a national bereavement camp for kids. "So many loved ones, family members, friends, classmates, colleagues, and our first responders struggle to understand such a loss and are left traumatized. With the guidelines, communities across the country can coordinate a compassionate response to suicide and better facilitate healing for those struggling."

The *National Guidelines* provide research evidence showing that exposure to suicide is a risk factor for many negative consequences, including an increased risk of suicide among the bereaved and others who are traumatized or affected.

"The tragedy of suicide is frequently redoubled because it initiates a fresh and unfathomable crisis for those left behind," said Franklin Cook, M.A., SOSL Task Force Co-Lead and owner of Unified Community Solutions of Boston. "In too many cases, the aftermath of suicide causes damage and pain that is not understood and therefore not recognized. All too often, there is vastly insufficient care and support. These new guidelines offer a plan to remedy that."

The *National Guidelines* also call for the creation of improved resources, infrastructure, services, and systems to effectively respond to any incidence of suicide in the United States.

SOSL Task Force Co-Lead John R. Jordan, Ph.D., a psychologist in Pawtucket, RI, notes, "The guidelines outline how the suicide prevention field and grief support programs can work more closely together to support those grieving and struggling to cope. Collectively, we can begin to immediately implement the guidelines' goals of strengthening our infrastructure. We need to provide those who are exposed to a suicide access to effective services and support immediately, and for as long as necessary."

The *National Guidelines* provide a framework to help those in the suicide prevention field whose work is focused on grief, trauma, or traumatic loss to work more effectively with first responders, mental health clinicians, primary care providers, funeral professionals, social service agencies, grief support organizations, faith communities, state and local officials, educational institutions, military and veteran service providers, and others.

The SOSL Task Force is comprised of mental health clinicians and grief support providers, researchers, and advocates, all considered leading experts on various aspects of the impact of suicide on those left behind. Many of the task force members are survivors of suicide loss themselves.

"This landmark report underscores the importance of including survivors of suicide loss in all aspects of suicide prevention planning. The voice of those bereaved must inform all of our efforts," noted Doryn Chervin, Dr.P.H., Executive Secretary of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, and Vice President and Senior Scientist at Education Development Center, Inc.

Responding to Grief, Trauma, and Distress After a Suicide: U.S. National Guidelines focuses on [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) Objective 10.1, on assisting those bereaved by suicide; 10.2, on responding to trauma and complications of grief; and 10.5, on caring for service providers, first responders, and others who are exposed to suicide.

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

(www.ActionAllianceforSuicidePrevention.org) is the public-private partnership working to advance the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* and make suicide prevention a national priority. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, through the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) operates the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010 by former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates with the goal of saving 20,000 lives in five years.