



To develop and implement an effective comprehensive community-based mental health plan for overall youth well-being in Palo Alto

March 3, 2017

Dear Project Safety Net Partners and Supporters,

As you may recall, in 2015, the California Department of Public Health, on behalf of Palo Alto and the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health, asked the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assist our community in better understanding youth suicide. The final Epi-Aid report, which includes the agency's findings and recommendations, was published today, and is now available on the SCCPHD website: www.sccphd.org/epi-aid.

As a collaborative community network, Project Safety Net (PSN) welcomes the Epi-Aid report as an additional resource to inform our education, prevention, and intervention efforts towards preventing teen suicide and promoting youth well-being. PSN and fellow partners assisted the CDC's investigation, as we provided current inventories of our city and county's youth suicide and wellness program activities and policies. In June, we also conducted a community survey with over 1000 concerned citizens who live, work, study or worship in Palo Alto to document existing perceptions of suicide and prevention. These efforts provided helpful information included in the final Epi-Aid report.

The loss of youth in our city and region to suicide has had an indelible impact on our lives, yet I have personally witnessed an unwavering commitment towards cultivating a healthier environment for our community. Out of tragedy, our community has emerged as a leader in youth well-being promotion and suicide prevention. The City of Palo Alto, the Palo Alto Unified School District, and other local entities have provided significant investments towards this effort.

Youth-serving and youth-led organizations, mental health professionals and institutions, students, and parents have all come together to promote suicide awareness and prevention. Project Safety Net has taken great care in ensuring that youth voices and perspectives are uplifted. Student-initiated organizations such as the Sources of Strength peer-mentoring program at Palo Alto High School and Gunn High School, as well as the "Changing the Narrative" series in Gunn's *The Oracle* student publication are especially inspirational examples of youth leadership.

While this report provides data to inform our work, we need to remain committed to our youth and cultivate a culture that emphasizes acceptance, diversity, and wellness. As individuals, we all have a role to play with respect to embracing mental health promotion and preventing suicide. On March 22nd, Project Safety Net will host an evening community forum to answer your questions about the report and dialogue about suggested next steps. Your voice and presence are essential to our collective effort in Palo Alto. Please save the date; I hope to see you there.

As always, please visit our website www.psnpalalto.com for the latest news in partner activities and mental health resources.

Sincerely,

Mary Cheryl B. Gloner, MPH, MBA
Project Safety Net Executive Director