



Poughkeepsie, NY... Dutchess County has launched a new mobile app, "Dutchess County HELPLINE", designed to help recognize the warning signs of suicide and provide a wealth of mental health resources for information and assistance. The app is an extension of Dutchess County's HELPLINE crisis telephone line where mental health professionals are available 24 hours a day, every day to provide support and assistance. The event announcing the new app was held on September 4 at Dutchess Community College's Bowne Hall with many students in attendance. Young adults and teens are among the target audiences for the new resource.



Dutchess Community College students are joined (from left) by Ulster County Director of Health and Mental Health Dr. Carol Smith, Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro, Ulster County Executive Mike Hein, Dutchess County Mental Hygiene's Coordinator for Prevention Services Marie Dynes, Dutchess County Commissioner of Mental Hygiene Dr. Kenneth Glatt and Dutchess County Mental Hygiene's Director of Community Services Beth Alter.

The Dutchess County HELPLINE app provides users with information about suicide warning signs and levels of risk. It offers helpful videos and advice about what to say to someone who may be at risk of suicide. A button available on every screen allows for instant connection to Dutchess County's HELPLINE crisis telephone line staffed 24/7 with experienced mental health professionals. The app also offers guidance for certain "at-risk" groups including young

adults/teens and veterans. There are a wide variety of resources, including local, state and national contacts.

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro said, "Dutchess County has been a leader in our suicide prevention efforts since the launch of HELPLINE in 1978. As the way we communicate and see information changes, we must continue to evolve to meet the needs of our community. This new mobile app, in addition to the recent launch of Dutchess TEXTS, provides another way for people to get connected, get help and quite possibly prevent a tragedy."

The Dutchess County HELPLINE app was developed in partnership with Ulster County Government and the Ulster County Mental Health Association, Inc.. Ulster County launched its SPEAK app last year for Apple products. In a cooperative agreement, Dutchess County utilized a similar platform and expanded the app's availability to Android devices. Ulster County Executive Mike Hein, who attended the launch event, said, "The importance of mental health services, and especially suicide prevention and crisis intervention, cannot be overstated. While I am proud to have helped develop the SPEAK app to aid those in need, I am just as proud of our partnership with Dutchess County in our collective efforts to help the residents of the Hudson Valley. Simply put, this is about empowering members of our community and saving lives."

Over the past five years, Dutchess County has seen an increase in death by suicide for the first time in any previous five year period in the last 30 years. The Dutchess County Department of Health's 2014 Community Health Status Report ranked suicide as the 8th leading cause of death in Dutchess County for 2011. Dutchess County is also experiencing a public health crisis of prescription drug/opiate drug abuse, including heroin, with more overdose hospitalizations and deaths being reported than ever before. Accidental overdose deaths have more than tripled from 24 deaths in 2008 to 63 deaths in 2013.

The mobile app is the latest addition to the Dutchess County HELPLINE program. Earlier this year, Dutchess TEXTS was launched as an alternate way to connect with the 24/7 crisis telephone hotline. Although Dutchess County HELPLINE (485-9700 or TOLL-FREE: [877-485-9700](tel:877-485-9700)) handles more than 22,000 calls annually, texting has become a dominant method of communication, particularly for people under 25 years of age. People who would rather type than talk can communicate with HELPLINE mental health professionals simply by texting "DMH" to 741 741. The new mobile app will now offer yet another way to connect and get emotional support, information and problem solving help that could prevent a tragedy.

Dutchess County Commissioner of Mental Hygiene Dr. Kenneth Glatt said, "Far too often, people overlook the warning signs of suicide or are hesitant to say anything. This new mobile app helps people understand what the warning signs are and offers guidance about what to say to help someone as well as provides connections to a wide variety of important resources. This app is a valuable resource that should be on everyone's mobile device because you never know when you may need it."

Dutchess Community College President Dr. Pamela Edington added, "At DCC, we are committed to shining a light on the issue of suicide and providing counseling, referral and other support services to help students through the difficult times that can inevitably come with being in college -- and of that age. Our Student Services staff is continually working to enhance these offerings ... and having the county's new HELPLINE mobile app is another welcome resource for us and for our students."

Steve Miccio, CEO of PEOPLE Inc., said, "Any time we can educate the public and offer solutions to assist all members of our community, we strengthen our social well-being. The county's new HELPLINE mobile app is a hopeful and powerful resource that will demonstrate an excellent return on investment."

The Dutchess County HELPLINE mobile app is part of a broad-based, countywide prevention initiative aimed at those at risk for developing mental health and/or substance use disorders. The prevention initiative is funded with \$350,000 from the New York State Office of Mental Health, secured by New York State Senator Greg Ball in 2013 as part of the 2013-14 State budget and was renewed in the 2014-15 State Budget.

The Dutchess County HELPLINE mobile app is available for free download through the [Apple App Store](#) or the [Google Play Store](#) by searching "Dutchess County HELPLINE."

"We are redefining and better integrating mental health services. This cooperative effort with Ulster County, along with the other tools we have launched, will bring about greater understanding to the issues of mental health and suicide - while helping save lives. I am grateful to all of our Mental Hygiene staff, in particular Marie Dynes who coordinated our mobile app project and Beth Alter who heads our HELPLINE program, and partner contract agencies for helping this county confront the serious issues facing so many," concluded County Executive Molinaro.