



Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive

NEWS RELEASE

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CELEBRITY SUICIDE SPARKS CONVERSATION ABOUT DEPRESSION Astorino reminds residents that help is as close as the phone

The death by suicide this week of Robin Williams, an actor who had spoken publicly about his battles with drugs, alcohol and depression, has sparked a national conversation about ways to get help for others with similar problems.

One in 10 Americans suffers from depression each year, and more than 30,000 take their own lives, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention in Atlanta. Nearly 250,000 Americans are treated at hospitals after suicide attempts. Suicide is a public health problem that can be prevented with appropriate treatment for the underlying mental health issues.

“Westchester has excellent mental health resources available in a crisis and for the long term,” said County Executive Robert P. Astorino. “Help is just a phone call away for residents who feel overwhelmed or who believe someone close to them is at risk.”

Available resources include:

- the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-TALK
- 911
- St. Vincent’s Hospital Crisis Prevention and Response Team at (914) 925-5959.
- Westchester/Putnam Suicide Coalition - www.westputspc.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Westchester Chapter www.afsp.org/westchester - telephone (914) 610-9156 or email westchesterny@afsp.org

Westchester County has been at the forefront of addressing issues around mental health as a public health concern. In 2013, County Executive Astorino created the “Safer Communities” initiative. A major focus of Safer Communities includes addressing overall emotional wellness for youth and adults and providing education and training on mental health illness and suicide prevention. The training programs include Youth Mental Health First Aid, safeTALK and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).

More

“We can all help prevent tragedies in our own communities by learning to recognize and take seriously the signs of depression,” said County Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD. “Subtle signs include withdrawal from family, friends and activities that were previously enjoyed or an increased use of alcohol or drugs. While some who are suicidal say they wish they were dead, talk about wanting to hurt themselves, or die or express hopelessness, not all do. However, talk like this should never be brushed aside.”

For additional information contact the Department of Community Mental Health at (914) 995-5225.