

POLICY TALK

The Latest in Public Policy Center News and Events



Featured News

Nebraska Strong Recovery Project Helping Nebraskans Cope During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The **Nebraska Strong Recovery Project** is providing crisis counseling services for free to Nebraskans who are currently dealing with anxiety, worry, or other concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Outreach activities have begun in many areas with teams of regional crisis counselors helping identify unmet needs and distributing resources in their communities. Counselors are encouraging anyone who needs free and confidential assistance to call the **Nebraska Rural Response Hotline** at **1-800-464-0258** or the **Nebraska Family Helpline** at **1-888-866-8660**. Visit the Nebraska Strong **Facebook** and **Twitter** pages for the latest news and events. This program is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in conjunction with the Center for



Mental Health Services (CMS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The PPC works collaboratively with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to implement this program statewide.

Public Policy Center Guiding K-12 Schools in Disaster Preparedness



The **University of Nebraska Public Policy Center** is collaborating with the **Nebraska Department of Education** to help Nebraska schools develop emergency operations plans. "The project is two-fold," said Denise Bulling, senior research director with the Public Policy Center and expert in

disaster response. "One is to enhance the ability of the Nebraska Department of Education to offer technical assistance with developing these plans, and two is to increase the quality of emergency operations plans within K-12 schools." Find out more about how the PPC is helping schools prepare for disasters and future emergencies in [Nebraska Today](#).

Center Director Speaks with National Institute of Justice about School Safety

Dr. Mario Scalora, director of the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, spoke with the **National Institute of Justice** about his collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Education and law enforcement to address school safety in Nebraska's rural schools. Dr. Scalora explains that "one size does not fit all in rural school safety" and discusses the importance of partnerships in helping schools address this issue.



Watch the short interview to learn more about the PPC's work in school violence prevention and how we are helping develop safety protocols for Nebraska Schools.

Center Senior Research Director Speaks During UNMC's COVID-19 Series

On Thursday, August 13, the Region VII Disaster Health Response Ecosystem (RDHRE), led by the **University of Nebraska Medical Center - UNMC** and **Nebraska Medicine**, hosted a Zoom series focused on COVID-19. RDHRE brings together partners and experts from across the region to address preparedness for all-hazards events. Dr. Denise Bulling, senior research director of the University of Nebraska Public



Policy Center, spoke on the Region VII Behavioral Health Initiative; Dr. James Lawler, associate professor in the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, discussed the current COVID-19 outlook; and Epidemiologist Pam Pizzi spoke about questions surrounding EEI's or epidemic evaluation indexes.

Nebraska Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative Enters Second Year of Efforts to Reduce Youth Suicide



The **Nebraska Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative** is working to decrease the suicide rate among Nebraska's youth. Thanks to funding provided by SAMHSA via the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Grant, the PPC is managing this program and working with **Region V Systems** and the **Nebraska Department of Education**. Other

community partners providing essential input for the grant activities include the Society of Care, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the State of Nebraska Judicial Branch, and Nebraska Juvenile Services. The PPC is serving a key role in evaluating and tracking the impact of all local activities funded by the grant. Over the past year, the project has provided suicide postvention training to southeast Nebraska colleges and universities, QPR Training of Trainer suicide prevention training to probation officers and community providers, a robust social media suicide awareness campaign, and is currently working with UNL's Big Red Resilience & Well-being to coordinate a local RU OK campaign in preparation for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. In response to the current pandemic, the PPC worked with Goldenrod Printing, LanguageLinc, and the Lakota Language Consortium to produce and distribute yard signs with positive messaging in a variety of languages for Lincoln's diverse neighborhoods. Next month, the PPC will be hosting a two-day Zero Suicide Academy training and sponsoring up to 16 teams of selected health and behavioral health organizations seeking to promote and provide safer suicide care for their patients.

Follow us to see the latest news and events.



Spotlight of the Month

New American Task Force Awarded People's Choice in Google's Impact Challenge

Google selected Lincoln's New Americans Task Force survey for a \$175k grant to fund an innovative program called CareerLadder. CareerLadder will create career pathways for foreign-trained professionals in Lincoln and throughout Nebraska to re-enter their high-skill careers, and will connect people without experience to in-demand careers. It will also cultivate a network of Lincoln professionals to serve as mentors while participants develop English competency, digital skills, and professional training. Additionally, the program will provide a leadership development and professional training course. Last month, the **New American Task Force** became the People's Choice winner after receiving the most votes from the public out of five nonprofits to receive an additional \$125k in funding.



In early July, Lincoln's New Americans Task Force survey, which gives assessment results of community barriers for immigrant and refugee communities, was featured in **the Journal Star**. The survey was conducted by the City of Lincoln in conjunction with the Public Policy Center. Senior Research Manager Dr. Janell Walther provided data analysis for the survey.



Next Time: the September issue of Policy Talk will include a new spotlight feature about an ongoing project.

Upcoming Events

Zero Suicide Academy

Date of Event: October 1-2, 2020

Hosted by the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, **Zero Suicide Academy** is a two-day training for health and behavioral health organizations seeking to dramatically reduce suicides among those in their care. This is an opportunity to learn about the Zero Suicide framework, receive direction on how to put that framework into effect, and prepare for some common hurdles. Additionally, you have the opportunity to network with other organizations with similar goals and build relationships for supplemental support. Please contact Kate Speck kspeck2@unl.edu or Mike Schiwart mike.schiwart@unl.edu for additional information.



Center News

Center Aids Project AWARE for State Educational Agencies to promote school-aged youth health

The Center is proud to serve as an evaluative partner on Project AWARE (Awareness Wellness and Resilience in Education) for State Educational Agencies. The project focuses on partnerships & collaboration between state and local systems to promote the behavioral well-being of school-aged youth and prevent youth violence. The **Nebraska Department of Education** is partnering with the **Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services** and three Local Educational Agencies, or LEAs (Chadron, South Sioux City, and Hastings) to achieve the goals of the grant. The grant was awarded by **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS)**. SAMHSA is a department within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**.

Center Hosts the First Virtual Great Plains Disaster Behavioral Health Conference

Last month, the Public Policy Center (PPC) hosted the 18th Annual Great Plains Disaster Behavioral Health Conference (GPDBHC) as a free virtual conference. With the cooperation and efforts of multiple organizations, GPDBHC welcomed over 250 participants. This year's conference focused on building resilience and long-term recovery and was preceded by a virtual exercise that allowed regions and state partners to work together to identify gaps and work to improve their disaster response plans for future use. Special thanks to the speakers, including Jane Cage, Mikayla Johnson (DHHS), Alice Mitwaruciu (CAPS-UNL), Kate Speck (PPC), First Lady Susanne Shore and more! Learn more about the **GPDBH conference**.

Community Resources

Nebraska Youth Suicide Prevention and The Nebraska Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Nebraska Youth Suicide Prevention is working to decrease the suicide rate among young people by sharing resources on their **website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram** for people currently dealing with anxiety and worry. During difficult or challenging times, mental health is especially important. **Individuals in need of help can contact The Nebraska Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255**. The lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention, and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

SAMHSA Guide to Social Distancing

The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** has issued guidelines for taking care of your mental and emotional health during the current COVID-19 outbreak. **This short handout** explains social distancing, quarantine, and isolation; common reactions to these measures; and what you can do if you find yourself needing to implement these precautions.



CONTACT US

University of Nebraska
Public Policy Center

215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 401
Lincoln, NE 68588
402.472.5678 | ppc.unl.edu

Our mission is to link policy with research, process & practice.

We team with policymakers & other stakeholders to actively inform public policy & put knowledge into action.



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