

# HEALTHY SUSSEX QUARTERLY

Coming Together for a Healthy Sussex County

July 2022

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



As a longstanding business owner and service provider in Delaware, I, alongside many other national and state leaders, have grave concerns over the general wellbeing of our family, friends, and neighbors. According to the Oxford Dictionary, wellbeing

is, "the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy." By this definition alone, it is evident that an increasing number of Delawareans are not well. Mental health concerns were already on the rise across America prior to the pandemic. In 2019, 19.86% of adults experienced a mental illness, equivalent to nearly 50 million Americans. Post-pandemic, the numbers are considerably worse. For example, almost 5% of all American adults report having serious thoughts of suicide, an increase of 664,000 people from last year. We are experiencing in real time how the collective trauma caused by the pandemic amplifies present issues across the state.

**We hear the term *trauma* quite often in our society today, but do we actually know what it is? Trauma is defined by the American Psychological Association (APA) as, "the emotional response someone has to an extremely negative event."**

It can manifest in short and long term emotional, physical, and psychological symptoms. While trauma

is a normal reaction, the effects can be so severe that they interfere with an individual's ability to live a normal life. This is particularly true in our youth, as over **2.5 million young Americans have severe depression, with 15.08% of youth experiencing a major depressive episode in the past year.** In cases such as these and many others, mental health access in both public and private sectors is needed to treat the stress and dysfunction caused by trauma and restore the individual to a state of wellbeing.

As the previous data conveys, it is undisputable that the COVID-19 pandemic was a horrible event that continues to plague communities in Delaware and beyond. Each of us experienced conditions such as uncertainty about our health, fear for our loved

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### SCHC MISSION

The Sussex County Health Coalition exists to engage the entire community in collaborative family-focused effort to improve the health of children, youth and families in Sussex County.



### SCHC VISION

We envision a community in which our citizens and institutions (public, private, and not-for-profit) are actively engaged in community health promotion as a shared community good, and working together to create a cultural and physical environment which supports healthy lifestyles for our children and their families.

ones, and worry over the economic impact on our households and country. Our freedoms were abruptly constrained as we endured a seemingly endless lockdown, and we lost connections with others. Many of us lost loved ones. All of these circumstances compounded to create the perfect environment for anxiety to thrive. Although this shared trauma marks us all, many people within the Diamond state are suffering more than others. The lack of sufficient mental health resources in Delaware means these people are left to traverse life without the tools needed to posture them for healing.

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A PERSON SUFFERING FROM TRAUMA?

People who have endured traumatic events often appear shaky, disoriented, and withdrawn. They may not respond to conversation as they normally would. They may have nightmares, edginess, irritability, and poor concentration. Emotional symptoms of trauma include denial, anger, sadness, mood swings and emotional outbursts. It can also manifest physically, with paleness, lethargy, fatigue, poor concentration, and a racing heartbeat. While these symptoms are common, they are not exhaustive and can vary in severity.

Those enduring the effects of trauma may also redirect their overwhelming emotions toward others, such as friends or family members, or gravitate toward self-destructive behaviors, such as substance abuse.

**Nearly 8% of U.S. adults and 4.08% of youth had a substance use disorder in the past year.**

Although the communication of pain is often unique to the individual, the common thread of suffering weaves through every personal experience. ***Unfortunately, in Delaware, this suffering is only austere acknowledged, as is evident by the scant funding allocated to public health initiatives and programming at the state and local levels.***

Individuals seeking help for their trauma will find sporadic resources. Furthermore, mental health providers are all stretched thin; many of these faithful servants are suffering amidst the increased demand for services, with no sign of aid from state legislation or government initiatives in sight. As I watch millions of dollars enter our state for workforce and infrastructure endeavors, I am concerned that the wellbeing of the constituents who make up this workforce is being neglected. Despite the current surplus of funds, absolutely no additional money has been allocated

toward Public Health in the state budget for 2023. This is in direct contrast to our neighboring states, all of which allocated additional funds in their state budgets for public health post-pandemic.

I ask us to consider our leaderships' priorities amidst this glaring deficiency. While I do not disagree that all sectors of our communities deserve a quality workforce, I must argue that in order to have such, you must have healthy individuals to comprise that very workforce. As it currently stands, it appears as though the wellbeing of constituents is less imperative than a business' bottom line. If this is truly the case, then we've lost our way as a state.

To not bolster the efforts of public health workers who continue to work tenaciously with the limited resources available in the pandemic's aftermath is unconscionable. We must pursue a change. Delaware deserves the best quality workforce, but one that emphasizes and supports the pursuit of wellbeing for every Delawarean.



Peggy M. Geisler  
Executive Director

## COMING SOON...

### MEET THE FUNDER SERIES

**Tynetta Brown, President and CEO  
Philanthropy Delaware**

September 15, 2022 @ 12:00 pm

[Register in advance for this meeting >](#)

**Kate Dupont-Phillips, Executive Director  
Healthy Communities Delaware**

November 10, 2022 @ 11:00 am

[Register in advance for this meeting >](#)

**Joanna Staib, Executive Director  
Delaware Workforce Development Board**

Joanna.Staib@delaware.gov

Jan 12, 2023 @ 11:00 am

[Register in advance for this meeting >](#)

**David Baker, USDA Rural Development State  
Director for Delaware/Maryland**

March 16, 2023 @ 12pm

[Register in advance for this meeting >](#)



THANK YOU



Thank you to our signature sponsor  
Matt Haley Trust



**On June 4, 2022, we hosted our First Annual Rockin' for Recovery Concert Event at Hudson Fields in Milton, Delaware, and thanks to the support and contributions from a variety of sponsors, partners and volunteers, it was a huge success!**



The event was a unique approach to ending the stigma around recovery and allowed for organic conversations and positive recovery themed progress to be made with hundreds of attendees. The Rockfest offered a welcoming, safe and drug free atmosphere which allowed for a new approach to the way recovery efforts are viewed. Again, we would like to thank all of our sponsors, volunteers and partners for their outstanding effort and please stay tuned for future Delaware Goes Purple themed events!

# DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

“Delaware Libraries are delighted to facilitate Imagination Library for our youngest Delawareans and their families,” said Dr. Annie Norman, State Librarian. “Acquiring the reading and library habit early is a foundation for curiosity and success throughout life!”



On May 5, 2022, Governor John Carney, First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney, and Dr. Annie Norman of the Delaware Libraries welcomed American icon Dolly Parton for a statewide celebration of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, to mark that every child in Delaware from birth to age five, is eligible to enroll in this free book-gifting program. Public librarians and library staff, early education advocates, members of the General Assembly and members of the Cabinet also joined in the event.

Inspired by her father's inability to read and write, Dolly Parton started her Imagination Library in 1995 to foster a love of reading for the children within her home county. Today, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is the world's preeminent early childhood book-gifting program that is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading. In partnership with local affiliate partners, the program mails high quality, age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five—at no cost to families.

“With gratitude to all the partners, it is my privilege to serve as the honorary chair of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Delaware,” said First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney. “The Imagination Library



books are a wonderful collection and I'm grateful I've been able to read them with young Delawareans since the program's inception. I look forward to seeing more Delaware families sign up for this incredible program.”

In Delaware, every child under the age of five is eligible to receive a gift of a monthly book at no charge to families. Almost 1,500 Delaware children were signed up for the Imagination Library since Dolly's visit was announced to bring total active enrollment to almost 23,000 Delaware children, and almost 6,000 graduates since 2020.

**Families can sign up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library on Delaware Libraries' website: [delawarelibraries.org/imagination](https://delawarelibraries.org/imagination).**

# SEAFORD COMMUNITY OF HOPE



Established in 2019, the Seaford Community of Hope (SCOH) initiative is a cross-agency, cross-sector community action initiative that aims to engage a broad spectrum of public, private, faith-based and nonprofit community partners to establish place-based Family Resource Centers (FRC). These FRCs offer highly coordinated, comprehensive services and supports to vulnerable families living in subsidized housing developments in Seaford, starting with families living at Meadowbridge Apartments and the surrounding area.

This program's aim is to increase community resilience, stability, self-sufficiency, and economic advancement by providing wraparound services addressing social determinants of health. There is an overarching goal of reducing child abuse, neglect, and referral into the child welfare system. Through this project, we hope to help mitigate the effects of social inequality and intergenerational poverty.

Studies show that one in five Black Americans are experiencing poverty for the third generation in a row, compared to just one in a hundred white Americans.

The SCOH initiative was built collaboratively with early partners that included Delaware's First Lady, Tracey Quillen Carney, as part of her First Chance initiative, Children & Families First, First State Community Action Agency, Sussex County Health Coalition, and the Delaware Division of Family Services (DFS).

Currently, the SCOH is under way with broad committed community partnerships and an established committee planning structure, with numerous partners engaged in service delivery through educational resources and programming. Our Stakeholder Committee regularly meets every month. Partner engagement is across Seaford's sectors including:

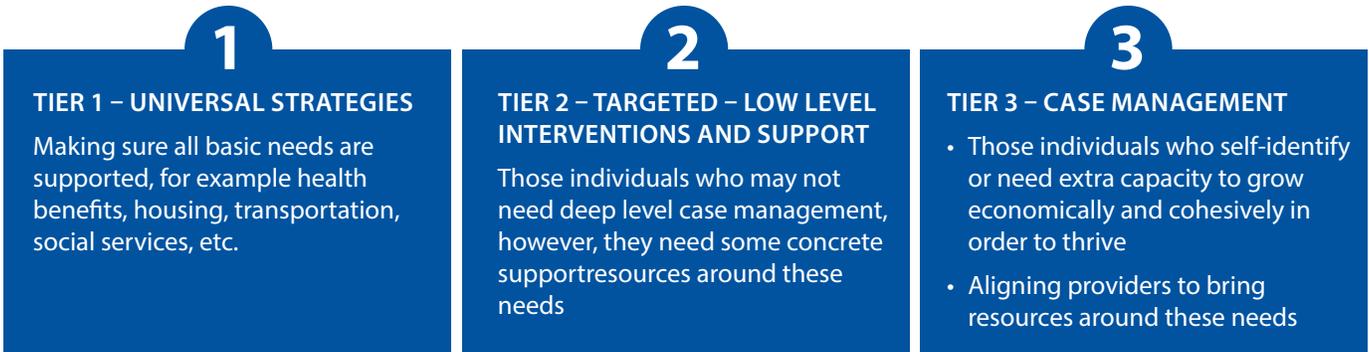
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**HEALTH • PUBLIC HEALTH • BEHAVIORAL HEALTH • MENTAL HEALTH  
CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES • HOUSING • PUBLIC ASSISTANCE • FINANCIAL  
EDUCATIONAL • POLICING • LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS**

**The committee has identified three layers of focus for the SCOH program:**



**The SCOH program is focused on three levels of support:**



The SCOH team is onsite at Meadowbridge Apartments on a consistent basis, hosting numerous events. A key strategy related to all SCOH objectives is the establishment and use of Parent and Youth Advisory Councils/Committees. These Committees are populated by individuals with lived experience with inter-generational poverty, disenfranchisement, and/or involvement with child welfare.

The Parent Advisory Committee has acted as a point of contact for the residents to help plan community activities and disseminate information throughout the Seaford Community of Hope. The goal is for the parents and grandparents to lead this committee with staff support and assist with recruitment of additional parents and rotate participation. Staff actively listens to what participants say they need to thrive.

Due to consistency in this community, there has been tremendous progress in the comfort level of residents. Families are more vocal about their needs and are willing to share ideas on things that they would like to see for their community. The trust and engagement that has been built in this community in the past couple years has also allowed for a deeper dive into case management and beginning to work with families on an individual basis.

An enrollment/intake process has been established in order get a better understanding of family dynamics and gaps that exist, and how we can address barriers. Appropriate assessment tools are used to learn more about family needs and priorities and to assist in developing and following up on family-led goal

planning. A bi-directional referral system has been established with several partner agencies for families in need of emergency services, health resources, financial support and workforce development.

**Specific programming/supports include:**

- **A Parent Advisory Committee that meet regularly to guide project activities**
- **Community-wide events such as food distribution events, housing education events, educational family fun nights, health and wellness activities, nutrition education, parenting education, youth empowerment, and workforce development**
- **The development of a Family Resource Center where supports and services come right to the neighborhood to reduce barriers to engagement**
- **One-on-one case management where staff/partners work with residents on an individual basis to help them achieve goals**



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Furthermore, The Seaford Community of Hope program has also started an initiative called the Healthy Community Dollar Dinner Project in partnership with the Western Sussex Boys and Girls Club. This initiative champions community dinners as an opportunity for families and individuals to connect with each other through meaningful conversation and a shared meal, hence building a sense of community cohesion.

**Studies show that the simple act of sharing a meal helps to build confident, caring and connected children and families.**

By participating in community dinners, the hope is that individual families will feel inspired to jumpstart

their own commitments to nightly dinners, as they feel part of something bigger than themselves. Furthermore, these community dinners address many barriers in our community, including food insecurity and nutrition education by giving families access to affordable nutritious meals and healthy recipes to prepare the meals at home.

Our Healthy Family Dollar Dinners incorporate an educational component, bringing in speakers from various community organizations to present meaningful resources and information about topics and skills that families can use in their everyday life.

**Dinners are held on the second Thursday at the Western Sussex Boys and Girls Club in Seaford.**

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, by funding scientific research, educating the public about mental health and suicide prevention, advocating for public policies, funding scientific research, and supporting survivors of suicide loss and those with lived experience. The local [Delaware Chapter](#) is dedicated to supporting the entire state.

**Suicide does not discriminate and can affect anyone; and certain demographics, such as our youth, are at an increased risk. In Delaware suicide is the 13<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death and the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death for youth ages 10–24.**

The good news is we have a growing set of tools and as a society we continue to break the stigma surrounding mental health. It is critically important to provide mental health and suicide prevention education and resources to our youth, schools and the community surrounding them. Parents, schools, pediatricians, coaches, mental health professionals, youth clubs, community organizations and more, all have an important role to play in reducing youth suicide. By educating yourself, you can learn what puts kids at greatest risk for suicide and what protects them most strongly. AFSP partners with local schools and organizations to provide many free prevention



and postvention programs and resources for ages 14 and up and a read along program for ages 5-11. While AFSP has suicide prevention expertise, we need partners who can help spread awareness and bring these programs to their schools and communities.

Here are a few of AFSP's prevention programs: [It's Real: Teens and Mental Health](#) ages 14–18, [It's Real: College Students and Mental Health](#) ages 15+, [More than Sad for Educators and Parents](#) ages 18+, [Talk Saves Lives](#) ages 18+, [Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health](#) (read along) ages 5–11.

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Earlier this year the American Academy of Pediatrics and AFSP, with experts from NIMH created a [Blueprint for Youth Suicide Prevention](#). This comprehensive document aims to support pediatric health clinicians in identifying strategies and partnerships to support children and teens at risk. For schools, AFSP, with partners, created a [Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention](#) that gives educators and school administrators a comprehensive way to implement suicide prevention policies in their local community. Also, the [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools](#) offers best practices and practical tools to help schools in the aftermath of a suicide.

AFSP advocates for policies and legislation at the federal and state level that help reduce suicide and improve mental health. AFSP supports requirements for regular suicide prevention training and the adoption of suicide prevention, intervention, and

postvention policies in schools. Most recently we advocated for HB300, this Act establishes a mental health services unit for Delaware middle schools and was passed unanimously by the house and senate. Thousands of Field Advocates across the country are speaking out and fighting for essential policy changes that will save lives, we need your voice, click here to become an advocate.

**For more information, please visit our [Delaware chapter website](#) or email Michelle Vorpahl, AFSP DE & MD Associate Area Director at [mvorpahl@afsp.org](mailto:mvorpahl@afsp.org). Together we can create a culture that is smart about mental health in Delaware.**

**If you are in crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741.**

## Suicide Prevention Resources

### Visit

Your Primary Care Provider  
Mental Health Professional  
Emergency Department  
Urgent Care Clinic

### Find a Mental Health Provider

[findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)  
[mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help)

### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
Veterans: Press 1

### Crisis Text Line

Text TALK to 741741 to text with a trained crisis counselor for free, 24/7

[afsp.org/resources](http://afsp.org/resources)



## After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools

offers best practices to help schools respond to a suicide death

[afsp.org/AfterASuicide](http://afsp.org/AfterASuicide)



American  
Foundation  
for Suicide  
Prevention