



Georgia Department of Behavioral Health
& Developmental Disabilities

Judy Fitzgerald, Commissioner

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 19, 2019

Angelyn D. McDonald, Press Secretary
angelyn.dionysatos@dbhdd.ga.gov
404.463.8035

DBHDD, state agencies join forces to roll out nation’s most comprehensive implementation of an evidence-based prevention curriculum, Sources of Strength

ATLANTA—The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) is partnering with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to implement an evidence-based prevention curriculum, Sources of Strength (SOS), in various Georgia middle and high schools. According to the developer of the program, “this strategic partnership between multiple state agencies and dozens of communities across Georgia is one of the most comprehensive and coordinated efforts to implement Sources of Strength in the nation.”

Aimed for implementation in more than 60 schools, this will be the latest and largest effort by DBHDD’s State Opioid Response, an initiative within the department’s Office of Behavioral Health Prevention tasked with combatting Georgia’s opioid crisis. “We hope that these efforts will go a long way toward empowering our youth to resist the misuse of substances like opioids, and toward reducing the spread of this crisis,” said Brian K. Le, senior coordinator of DBHDD’s Statewide Opioid Response initiative. “SOS will help youth gain the much-needed coping skills and increase their resiliency to overcome the stressors of everyday life.”

The Sources of Strength curriculum involves training youth to build skills to resist and protect themselves against pressures and temptations to misuse substances like opioids. It also encourages them to interact with and connect to their peers.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has worked with DBHDD to support implementation of Sources of Strength in Georgia schools since the first Garrett Lee Smith grant and continued as part of GaDOE’s suicide prevention work. “We are grateful for and appreciative of this partnership that allows us to collaborate with our fellow agencies to bring Sources of Strength to so many more schools,” said Cheryl Benefield, program manager for Safe and Supportive Schools in GaDOE’s Office of School Safety and Climate.

The Division of Family and Children Services’ (DFCS) Prevention and Community Support Section is committed to increasing the availability of Sources of Strength to Georgia’s youth as a form of primary prevention of not only substance abuse, but also suicide, bullying, and other forms of interpersonal violence. Sources of Strength increases

and promotes protective factors in middle- and high-school students, through promoting youth leadership and developing appropriate interpersonal relationships. “Through my role on Georgia’s Youth Suicide Task Force, it became apparent that there was a need for primary prevention services to decrease the rising youth suicide rate,” said DFCS Deputy Section Director Deborah Chosewood. “This partnership with GaDoE and DBHDD is a way for us to collaborate to address the needs of young people across the state.”

The state will have 30 trainers certified for the SOS curriculum, with the goal to start conducting local school trainings as early as January 2020.

Media Contact:

Angelyn Dionysatos McDonald

Press Secretary

angelyn.dionysatos@dbhdd.ga.gov

404.463.8035

All Other Inquiries Related to this Program Implementation:

Brian K. Le, MPH

Senior Program Coordinator

State Opioid Response

brian.le@dbhdd.ga.gov

404.783.8170

###

The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) is the state agency that supports people with mental health needs, substance use disorders, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our vision is easy access to high-quality care that leads to a life of recovery and independence for the people we serve. Judy Fitzgerald has served as commissioner of DBHDD since 2016.