

PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Mountain-Pacific Quality Health Receives Funding to Lead Youth
Suicide and Mental Illness Initiative**

Helena, Mont., (August 16, 2017) Mountain-Pacific Quality Health will lead a one-year project that aims to increase the awareness of mental illness and reduce teen suicide in the greater Helena area. On August 14, 2017, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana presented Mountain-Pacific with a \$50,000 grant to help fund the project.

Montana ranks among the highest in the nation for suicide. In fact, Montana's suicide rate has been at or near the top for nearly four decades. Suicide and attempted suicide seem especially prevalent among high school students. There were 27 youth suicides from January 1, 2014 to March 16, 2017—seven of which occurred in the greater Helena area.

“At base, the project will involve teens helping teens,” says Mountain-Pacific's Janet Whitmoyer. “We'll establish a youth task force and look to its members to develop messaging and strategies geared to increasing awareness of problems common to this age group such as the stigma of mental health, stress, relationship issues and bullying. The goal is to supply teens with an arsenal of tools and resources that will help them cope with the stressors that are often precursors to suicidal behavior. The ultimate goal is to develop an effective, youth-centered campaign that can be adapted and replicated in other communities throughout the state, region and even nationally.

Mountain-Pacific engaged a consortium of stakeholders, including the Helena School district, the East Helena School District, Shodair Children's Hospital and the Montana Hospital Association.

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“Mountain-Pacific has been a trusted health care partner for more than 40 years in Montana,” says Sara Medley, Mountain-Pacific CEO. “This initiative is just one more way we can show our commitment to improving lives in the communities we serve. We are honored to have this opportunity to make a lasting impact and look forward to working with all the stakeholders on this critically important project. And of course, a huge thank you to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana for making it all possible.”

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About Mountain-Pacific Quality Health—Mountain-Pacific is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation and holds federal and state contracts that allow them to oversee the quality of care for Medicare and Medicaid members. Mountain-Pacific works within its region (Montana, Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Territories of Guam and American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) to help improve the delivery of health care and the systems that provide it. Mountain-Pacific’s goal is to increase access to high-quality health care that is affordable, safe and of value to the patients they serve. www.mpqhf.org