

Disability Matters – #Advocacy Matters

June 12, 2018

Mental Health Funding and Suicide

Many articles have been written about the suicide deaths of Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain. In some of our newspapers, we may have noticed the deaths of local individuals who died in the last week but the paper did not list the cause of death. We find out through friends the death was due to suicide.

Calls to crisis lines have increased since last week. In Utah, calls to the Utah's largest suicide prevention program jumped 30%-40%.

Calls to the National Suicide Hotline jumped 25% within 2 days of the death of Kate Spade.

What can we do in the advocacy community?

First, we must continue to press for increased funding for community mental health services. In Pennsylvania, funding to community mental health services has been cut. This may be the case in other states as well. We must press congress and our state legislatures to increase funding for community mental health services.

If you visit our website at disabilityrightspa.org, you will find a link to contact your members of congress to ask them to increase funding for community mental health services.

Second, we can't lose some of the gains we made with the Affordable Care Act. We must have mental health parity in health insurance and we cannot return to discrimination in coverage. We cannot return to a time when insurance companies could discriminate based on a pre-existing condition.

Third, we must end the stigma that still exists around mental illness. According to Mental Health America, 1 in 5 adults have a mental health condition, yet many of our friends, family, and coworkers do not know that we live with a hidden disability.

Advocacy matters and we must press for increased funding for community based services for persons with mental illness, ensure continued parity for insurance coverage for mental and behavioral health needs, and reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.