



**NEW YORK STATE  
OFFICE OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES  
52 WASHINGTON STREET  
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**Andrew M. Cuomo**  
Governor

**Gladys Carrión, Esq.**  
Commissioner

## Informational Letter

<b>Transmittal:</b>	13-OCFS-INF-01
<b>To:</b>	Commissioners of Social Services Executive Directors of Voluntary Authorized Agencies
<b>Issuing Division/Office:</b>	Strategic Planning and Policy Development
<b>Date:</b>	January 24, 2012
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>The Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Act and Building Competent Communities for Youth Suicide Prevention</b>
<b>Suggested Distribution:</b>	Directors of Social Services Planning Coordinators Staff Development Coordinators
<b>Contact Person(s):</b>	See pages 2-5
<b>Attachments:</b>	no
<b>Attachment Available Online:</b>	n/a

### Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Canceled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
			42 USC 290bb-36 Garret Lee Smith Memorial Act		

### I. Purpose

The purpose of the Informational Letter is to inform local social services districts and other agencies about the *Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Act Grant* awarded in 2011 to the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH). It is provided through the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The three-year grant is designed to build capacity in child-caring systems, Latina youth services organizations, and selected counties to increase detection of youth suicide risk, prevent suicide attempts and deaths, and respond to suicide events effectively. The development of competent communities, via the grant, seeks to enhance recognition of signs of suicide and provide effective

screening, assessment, safety planning, treatment, referral and follow-up for youth at risk of suicide.

## II. Background

On Oct. 21, 2004, President Bush signed the nation's first youth suicide prevention bill into law. The bill was named in memory of then-Senator Gordon Smith's son who died by suicide in 2003, the day before his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. The Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act recognizes that youth suicide is a public health crisis linked to underlying mental health problems. It authorizes \$82 million over three years for youth suicide prevention programs, including voluntary and confidential screening programs. This legislation provides grants to states, American Indian Tribes, and colleges to support suicide prevention efforts and initiatives. SAMHSA is tasked with implementing the law, and awards grants or cooperative agreements to eligible entities.

On Aug. 9, 2011, OMH announced that New York State was awarded a federal SAMHSA sponsored *Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant* in the amount of \$1,440,000 over the next three years. The project is administered by OMH Suicide Prevention Initiative through the Research Foundation for Mental Health.

Two criteria were used to choose counties: a demonstrated higher level of youth suicide deaths or attempts, and a desire by county and/or school leadership to address the concern. In year one, four counties were selected: Broome, Cayuga, Erie, and Fulton. Year two expands this group to include Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence and Tioga counties.

Four **Youth Suicide Prevention Centers** have been created and are operating throughout New York State. These centers have become critical training entities. Also, they are upgrading their own staff's skills to better serve high-risk youth.

- **Hillside Family of Agencies** in Rochester covers a large area in Western and Central New York (Tony Hess, 585-654-1330).

[ahess@hillside.com](mailto:ahess@hillside.com)

- **Parsons Child and Family Center** in Albany covers some of Central New York and the Hudson Valley (Kelly Busch, 518-426-2600).

[buschk@parsonscenter.org](mailto:buschk@parsonscenter.org)

- **Communilife** in New York City covers the Bronx and Long Island and provides special expertise in Latina Youth (Miriam Steinberg, 718-364-7700, ext. 5211).

[msteinberg@comunlife.org](mailto:msteinberg@comunlife.org)

- **New York Foundling** in NYC covers the remainder of New York City, Westchester and Rockland counties (Ketsia Delarosa-Torres, 212-660-1306).

[ketsiad@nyfoundling.org](mailto:ketsiad@nyfoundling.org)

OMH created the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Initiative Advisory Board to complement the efforts of the initiative funded by the grant. Staff from the Office of Children and Family Services is represented on the board.

### **III. Program Implications**

The New York State Garrett Lee Smith county coalition goals are two-fold:

- To create informed county-based infrastructures that identify and respond to local needs related to youth suicide prevention, and
- To provide easy access to the network of best-practice and evidence-based resources available through the Youth Suicide Prevention Centers and OMH

There are four underlying principles to the Competent Communities for Youth Suicide Prevention Model:

- Concern for youth suicide prevention is shared by all community members.
- All members can recognize signs of risk.
- The community has a coordinated fabric of prevention activities that are integrated into community established services.
- All members know how and where to get help when a community member is in need and are consistently inclined to do so.

Competent Community Coalitions engage school and community leaders (including mental health, government, law enforcement, education, recreation, clergy, business, community service agencies, and media) in order to:

- Develop community awareness of dimensions of the problem;
- Assess needs and existing services;
- Develop action plans that target identified needs and anticipate emerging ones; and
- Institutionalize systemic changes in collaborative relationships to enhance service delivery to at-risk youth and families.

The regional **Youth Suicide Prevention Centers** offer a variety of training to caregivers in recognizing signs of suicide and helping service providers improve suicide screening, risk assessment and treatment. The centers also work directly with youth to build the strengths that help them get through adversity and also provide helpful materials pertaining to suicide prevention.

**Trainings offered to coalitions:**

**Cultural Competence Skill Development**

**Building Youth Resilience**

**Clinical Tools**

**Gatekeeper and Community Training-Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), SafeTALK, and Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)**

**CONNECT**-community postvention training, an evidence-based model from National Alliance on Mental Illnesses (NAMI)

**The Lifelines© School-based Trainings**-an evidence-based comprehensive, school-wide suicide prevention and postvention program for students in grades 8-12.

**IV. Staff Support and Contacts**

For information pertaining to attending regional in-person trainings or additional questions concerning this INF, please contact one of the four regional Youth Suicide Prevention Centers listed earlier or one of the following Suicide Initiative representatives:

**Melanie Puerto-Conte**

Director, NYS Suicide Prevention Initiative  
NYS Office of Mental Health  
44 Holland Avenue-8<sup>th</sup> floor  
Albany, NY 12208  
518-408-2013  
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**Pat Breux**

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Suicide Prevention Center of New York  
150 Broadway, Suite 301  
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518-402-1156  
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**Sam Catroppa**

Upstate Suicide Prevention Coordinator  
Central NY Field Office  
315-426-3922  
FAX: 315-426-3950  
CELL: 315-456-9526  
[Sam.Catroppa@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Sam.Catroppa@omh.ny.gov)

**Website Resources**

New York State Office of Mental Health  
<http://www.omh.ny.gov/index.html>

New York State Office of Mental Health Garrett Lee Smith Webpage  
[http://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/suicide\\_prevention/Garrett\\_Lee\\_Smith/](http://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/suicide_prevention/Garrett_Lee_Smith/)

Suicide Prevention Center of New York  
[www.preventsuicideny.org](http://www.preventsuicideny.org)

American Association of Suicidology  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide  
<http://www.sptsusa.org/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center  
[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

**Telephone Crisis Resource**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

*s/s Nancy W. Martinez*

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**Issued By:**

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Title: Director  
Division/Office: Strategic Planning and Policy Development