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For Immediate Release

**Nation's Leading Mental Health Organizations Offer a Comprehensive Roadmap
for Reimagining Crisis Response for Mental Health,
Substance Use Disorders and Suicide Prevention**

*With More than Half of Americans Experiencing Emotional Distress, Comprehensive
Plan for 988 Crisis Hotline Envisions Robust Continuum of Care –
from Prevention to Recovery*

Washington, D.C. – November 18, 2021 – A collaborative of 15 of the nation's leading mental health professional organizations, advocacy groups and funders today published a roadmap to guide mental health crisis response mandated by the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020. The plan, [*A Consensus Approach and Recommendations for the Creation of a Comprehensive Crisis Response System*](#), offers federal and state policymakers a tried-and-tested, evidence-based toolkit for implementing a full continuum of mental health and substance use care in conjunction with the federally mandated #988 crisis hotline for mental health emergencies which will be operational in July 2022.

The unprecedented leadership collaboration brings together CEOs from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Mental Health America, National Association for Behavioral Healthcare, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Council for Mental Wellbeing, One Mind, Peg's Foundation, Steinberg Institute, The Kennedy Forum, Treatment Advocacy Center, and Well Being Trust. Drawing upon their collective expertise and influence, their detailed blueprint for advancing mental health care reimagines possibilities for stemming the mental health crisis as the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline transitions to a #988 hotline for mental health emergencies, beginning July 2022.

The plan is a challenge for elected officials and policymakers to use a more comprehensive approach to mental health care that can help meet the surging demand for crisis care, while improving outcomes for all experiencing mental health crises, suicide risk and substance use disorders. Recommendations include building local capacity for a **comprehensive continuum of care** that establishes *multiple pathways for effective crisis stabilization*, including: early outreach and engagement of people at risk; call center hubs staffed with trained crisis interventionists; mobile crisis teams; community-based treatment clinics; in-patient psychiatric facilities, housing, and post-crisis support.

With roughly half of all Americans experiencing emotional distress, the urgent mandate for a national #988 mental health crisis hotline - creates opportunity for state and local planners to

rebuild, reorganize and qualitatively expand capacity to address unmet need for mental health care. This roadmap is designed to help inform those planning and implementation efforts.

The recommendations presented in the guide draw upon learnings from high-level research which document proven new approaches to mental health care and crisis mitigation, as well as examples from community-based efforts to evolve new crisis-response systems, such as those in Eugene, OR (CAHOOTS) and Maricopa County, Arizona (Crisis Response Network), as well as in Texas, Pennsylvania, and across Connecticut.

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven the need for the significant expansion of mental health care. If managed effectively -- building workforce and program capacity and addressing inequities in care for communities of color -- state officials can marshal new resources to transform mental health care, as envisioned in the group's alignment document: [**A Unified Vision for Transforming Mental Health and Substance Abuse Care**](#), which calls for policy, programs and standards to prioritize mental health care and address the social and economic conditions that result in inadequate and inequitable access to effective, humane treatment.

The roadmap rests on seven key pillars for system transformation of mental health care in America, including:

- Early identification and crisis prevention, especially for families and young people;
- Rapid deployment of emergency crisis response and suicide prevention;
- Leveling inequities in access to care – including equitable access to peer support services, culturally and linguistically appropriate care, and a diversity of providers;
- Establishing integrated health and mental health care to ensure “whole-person” well-being;
- Achieving parity in payment by health plans for mental health and substance-use coverage;
- Assuring evidence-based standards of treatments and care; and,
- Engaging a diverse mental health care workforce, peer support and community-based programs.

Who We Are: an unprecedented collaboration of chief executives from 15 of the nation's leading mental health, addiction and well-being advocacy groups, funders and professional organizations who have come together to advance a unified vision for qualitative transformation of mental health and substance use care in the US. Founded in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in response to an intensifying mental health crisis, this leadership grouping coalesced to advance a consensus perspective on policy, programs, standards and resources that: 1) prioritize mental health and substance use care; and 2) address the social and economic determinants of mental health that disproportionately impact people of color and lower income communities. With the support of 45 additional organizations and institutions that have signed onto the Unified Vision statement, we offer federal, state and city officials a critical blueprint for systemic reform and a solution to the current mental health crisis affecting half of all Americans. To learn more visit: wellbeingtrust.org/news/unifiedvision/

Organizations and CEO Leadership

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention / CEO, Robert Gebbia

American Psychiatric Association / CEO & Medical Director, Saul Levin, MD, MPA, FRCP-E

American Psychological Association / CEO and Exec. Vice President, Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD

Massachusetts Association for Mental Health / President and CEO, Danna Mauch, PhD

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute / President and CEO, Andy Keller, PhD

Mental Health America / President and CEO, Schroeder Stribling, MSW

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare / President and CEO, Shawn Coughlin

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) / CEO, Daniel H. Gillison, Jr.

National Council for Mental Wellbeing / President and CEO, Charles Ingoglia, MSW

One Mind / Chairman, Garen Staglin; President, Brandon Staglin

Peg's Foundation / President, Rick Kellar, M.B.A.

Steinberg Institute / Chair, Thomas Insel, M.D. (former director NIMH until 2015)

The Kennedy Forum / Former U.S. Rep. (D-RI) and Founder, Kennedy Forum, Patrick J. Kennedy

Treatment Advocacy Center / Executive Director, Lisa Dailey

Well Being Trust / Chief Executive, Tyler Norris, MDiv; President, Benjamin F. Miller, PsyD

