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SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO SEEK OUT MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

*Parents and Trusted Adults Should Familiarize Themselves with
Potential Indicators of a Mental Health Crisis*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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LANSING, MICH. The Michigan State Police Office of School Safety, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and Community Mental Health Association of Michigan are committed to working in cooperation to support the mental health and well-being of students, families, school personnel and everyone affected by the senseless and tragic events in Oxford.

"The tragedy of the Oxford shootings, layered upon the collective trauma of the prolonged pandemic, has made many of us, as Michiganders, more fearful, more anxious, more reactive," said Robert Sheehan, CEO of the Community Mental Health Association of Michigan. "Now is the time for all of us to be attentive to the needs of each other and reach out rather than pull back; to listen with patience rather than lecture; to collectively build upon - and, where needed, rebuild - what has made our relationships and our communities strong. Only by taking these steps will we turn post-traumatic stress into post-traumatic growth."

"Schools must be safe havens," said State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice. "The mental and physical health of students and school staff are to be protected and nurtured. We must all commit to the state's [Top 10 Strategic Education Plan](#) goal of improving the health, safety and wellness of all learners, and the requisite resources—financial, human, temporal—to meet this goal."

Following the tragedy at Oxford High School, the ongoing pandemic and with the stressors of the holiday season, it is important to be aware of potential indicators of a mental health crisis:

- Cognitive reactions: Inability to stop thinking about the crisis, loss of objectivity, an inability to make decisions or an inability to express oneself verbally or in writing.
- Physical reactions: Chronic fatigue and exhaustion, gastrointestinal problems, headaches and other aches and pains, loss of appetite or difficulty sleeping.
- Emotional reactions: Excessive worry or anxiety, numbing, irritability, anger or rage, distressing thoughts or dreams, suicidal thoughts and/or severe depression.
- Behavioral or social reactions: Alcohol and substance abuse, withdrawal from contact with loved ones or an inability to complete or return to normal work responsibilities or daily tasks.

It can be difficult to talk to someone you care about who may be experiencing a mental health crisis or other trauma. When engaging in these conversations it is helpful to utilize active listening skills: Be attentive, repeat what you heard or ask for clarification, reflect feelings without judgement, ask open

ended questions, and summarize what is being shared. If you or someone you know is experiencing any of the above indicators, please seek professional help.

“MDHHS is committed to ensuring students, staff and their families have access to resources as they navigate coping with this tragedy,” said MDHHS director Elizabeth Hertel. “It’s okay to ask for help for mental health needs and we are ensuring access is available if, when and where help is needed.”

“Every student in Michigan deserves to feel safe and supported in school,” said Governor Gretchen Whitmer. “I am proud of the work we have done to put our students and teachers first by making the largest education investment in Michigan history, but we still have so much more to do. After the tragedy at Oxford High, we have to step up to ensure nothing like this ever happens again. I want to remind everyone that it is okay to not be okay. We should lean on each other and invest in resources for our kids and communities.”

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Community Mental Health Association of Michigan:
Mr. Robert Sheehan, Chief Executive Officer, 517-388-2520

Michigan Department of Education:
Mr. Martin Ackley, Director of Public and Governmental Affairs, 517-241-4395

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services:
Ms. Chelsea Wuth, Associate Public Information Officer, 517-241-2112

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