**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**                                       **Contact:** Robyn Thaw (650) 573-3935
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## County 'Youth Mental Health First Aid Training' Changes and Saves Lives

**SAN MATEO, CA** – Mental Health First Aid teaches individuals from the community how to help someone in emotional distress. Now there is a new Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) 8-hour training course designed for adults who work with or assist young people, ages 12-24.

School staff, in all capacities, can play a critical role in getting students the help they need. From classroom teachers, school health aides, and school administrators to coaches, bus drivers, and crossing guards – all school personnel can help bridge a student in crisis to the appropriate help based on YMHFA training.

The San Mateo County Office of Education has partnered with San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Office of Diversity and Equity to offer free Youth Mental Health First Aid certification training to staff and adult volunteers at all public and private middle and high schools throughout the County. To date, 450 adults who serve youths, including, teachers and other school personnel from 71 schools in 24 San Mateo County school districts have been trained in YMHFA.

The new Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training program focuses on how to help a young person who may be experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis. Program participants are introduced to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents and learn the importance of early intervention as well as how to help a youth in crisis or non-crisis situations who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

The training was critical for a local 25-year veteran teacher.

The teacher heard from a colleague that a 9-year-old student said she wanted to die and tried to swallow a pencil. Just one day before this happened, the teacher participated in the Youth Mental Health First Aid training and immediately recognized the student's mental health warning signs and sprang to action, following the Five-Step Action Plan she received at the training. Within 90 minutes, the teacher connected with the student's family and StarVista's Child and Adolescent Hotline and Prevention Program, who arranged an immediate meeting with a local therapist.

"Before I went through the YMHFA training, my reaction would have been to call the police for help," the local teacher said. "But because of this training, I was able to assess the situation and identify the mental health problems my student was displaying. I knew immediately how to help and which referral services to connect her with." You can watch the teacher telling her story in this video interview.

Certified instructors are available to provide **free** training on-site for groups of 15-30. To attend a free, local Youth Mental Health First Aid course or to host a YMHFA course at your school, please contact Lauren Getuiza at: c_lgetuiza@smcgov.org or (650) 372-8548. More information can be found at: www.smchealth.org/bhrs/ode/CommunityEd.

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