

Statement on Mental Health Awareness

June 22, 2018

The D.C. Commission on Persons with Disabilities (D.C.C.P.D.) sends our deepest condolences to the family, friends, and everyone touched by the recent loss of **Kate Spade**, Fashion Designer; **Anthony Bourdain**, Celebrity Chef, and **Stormiyah Denson-Jackson**, Student, of Washington, D.C. amongst others who have passed.



Figure 1 Stormiyah Denson-Jackson 2006-2018



Figure 2 Kate Spade 1962-2018



Figure 3 Anthony Bourdain 1956-2018

Stormiyah Denson-Jackson took her life on Jan. 23, 2018, age 12, at boarding school in Washington, DC. Known to loved ones as Storm, her mother said, "She loved life abundantly. She had goals".¹ Home videos show her leading a group of friends in prayer and then dancing joyously. These losses of life and light have further opened the discussion on mental health awareness and suicide both locally and across our nation.

According to The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, on average, there are 123 suicides per day in the United States and it is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.². Because the way data is collected, it is estimated that these numbers are higher. Stigma surrounding suicide leads to underreporting and the data collection methods critical to suicide prevention need to be improved.

There is never a single cause for suicide and some risk factors that may increase the chance of suicide can include mental health conditions, environmental factors such as bullying and stressful life events, and a family history of suicide, neglect, abuse, trauma, and substance abuse. Greater awareness of common risks, warning signs, effective interventions and treatments have been shown to reduce suicide attempts and ideations.

If you need help right now, contact the DC Access Help Line, **1-888-793-4357**, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** or contact the Crisis Text Line by **texting TALK to 741-741**.

Special congratulations to Hannah and Charlie Lucas for the creation and launch of the **notOK App™** - a digital panic button to get immediate support from a trusted group of pre-selected people. **notOK™** is available in iOS and Android versions.

There are professionals right here in our community who specialize in helping people reframe their ways of thinking, behaving, and coping. They can help you with finding coping strategies and problem-solve through issues that are burdening you and may seem unsolvable. Know that

¹ I Sent My Baby There to Learn: Mother of 12-Year-Old Girl Found Dead at DC School Speaks, January 24, 2018, Pat Collins and Andrea Swalec, <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/I-Sent-Cant-Understand-It-Mother-of-12-Year-Old-Girl-Found-Dead-at-DC-School-Speaks-470966403.html>

² Suicide Statistics, June 18, 2018, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>



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Information and Services Available:

The Access Help Line at 1-888-793-4357 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is an easy way to get connected to services provided by the DC Department of Behavioral Health and its certified behavioral health care providers.

DC Public School System - Mental Health Resources: Fortunately, there is help, support and information that can improve quality of life and long-term outcomes for students.

DC Behavioral Health Association: They offer services ranging from substance abuse and mental health treatment to housing supports for adults or children in foster care.

NAMI DC: NAMI DC is the local chapter for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, providing education, support, and advocacy for individuals and their families.

Mary's Center provides health care services regardless of one's ability to pay.

AFSP (The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) - National Capital Area is a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education and advocacy.

you are not alone and there are people ready to talk, listen, and help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The DC Commission on Persons with Disabilities

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The Commission serves as an advisory body to inform and advise the District on programs, services, facilities, and activities that impact the lives of residents with disabilities in the District of Columbia. The Commission is committed to enhancing the image, status, inclusion, and quality of life for all District of Columbia residents, visitors, and employees with disabilities, and ensuring that they have the same rights and opportunities as those without disabilities.



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