



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The Jason Foundation Launches Statewide Suicide Prevention Campaign**

HENDERSONVILLE, Tenn. – (July 1, 2020) –The Jason Foundation, Inc., a nationally-recognized leader in suicide awareness and prevention, today launched a new statewide initiative to combat suicide deaths, *Tennessee Won't Be Silent*. [The campaign](#) kicked off with a virtual press conference featuring remarks from Governor Bill Lee, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Commissioner Marie Williams, and Department of Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn on the importance of bringing conversations about mental health out into the open, especially during difficult times. Jason Foundation National Spokesperson Phillip Fulmer and Acadia Healthcare CEO Debbie Osteen, representing The Jason Foundation's [National Community Affiliates](#), also spoke in support of the campaign.

"Despite the many hardships that Tennesseans have endured these last few months, our message to anyone who may be struggling is this: you are not alone," said Gov. Lee. "Resources and help are available, and there is no shame in asking for support. Check in with your family members and friends. Talking openly about mental health can be hard, but it is incredibly important. I'm grateful to The Jason Foundation for their efforts to increase awareness and availability of resources for mental health."

The Jason Foundation is working to assemble collaborative partners from business, government, non-profits, and the community to lend their talents and passion to an array of *Tennessee Won't Be Silent* programs and projects throughout the year. The campaign will be focused on building awareness and providing information, tools and resources to better be able to identify and/or assist an individual who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts. The inaugural educational initiative will be focused on supporting and educating first responders, who are more likely to [die by suicide than in the line of duty](#).

"Suicide is preventable, and we know that awareness is key to prevention," said Clark Flatt, President of The Jason Foundation. "By increasing awareness across Tennessee, we have an enormous opportunity to save lives."

Suicide is a growing national public health crisis, with suicide rates [rising by 30 percent](#) across the country between 2000 and 2016. [Experts fear](#) the crisis will be made worse by COVID-19-related social isolation and economic hardship, which has been consistently [linked to an increase in suicides](#).

"Our experience from natural disasters, severe economic downturns, and other times of widespread distress is that the mental health impacts really hit home for people starting about five to six months after the event begins. The timing and the message of this campaign are perfect for our neighbors who are hurting," said Commissioner Williams.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting our students' well-being in far-reaching ways—academically, physically, and mentally," added Commissioner Schwinn. "Caring for the whole child is and must remain a top priority for our entire state, and partnerships like this are critical to ensuring students and families know where to turn for help."

For more information, resources, and to learn ways to get involved with *Tennessee Won't Be Silent*, please visit [www.tnwontbesilent.com](http://www.tnwontbesilent.com). Share your thoughts on social media using the hashtag #TNWontBeSilent.

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