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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SPOTTING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION

Returning to school or starting a new school can be a stressful period in an adolescent's life. It can be even more so for an adolescent with major depressive disorder, more commonly known as depression. According to Dr. Leo Bastiaens, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at Family Services of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, depression in adolescents impacts academic performance, family relationships, psychosocial development, and may lead to substance use disorders. The effects of unmanaged depression on the life of an adolescent and his or her family can be devastating.

While Dr. Bastiaens believes that screening for depression in schools should be as routine as screening for vision or hearing problems, the primary responsibility for identifying the signs and symptoms of depression lies with the family. The signs of depression in adolescents are basically the same as in adults: pervasive low and irritable mood, loss of interest in activities, sleep and appetite disturbances, poor concentration, negative thinking patterns such as hopelessness or helplessness, or suicidal thoughts.

Suicidal behavior is never the result of one disorder, stressor, or circumstance. Adolescents in a high-risk category for suicidal behavior typically share a combination of factors such as mood disturbances, substance use, impulsivity, poor problem-solving and social skills, hopelessness, a recent stressor, or access to firearms. Warning signs for suicidal behavior in adolescents include isolation and withdrawal, change in peer group, suicidal statements, self-injurious behavior, unnecessarily risky behavior, severe anxiety, or significant hopelessness.

If an adolescent among your friends or family exhibits any of these signs or symptoms, it is important to take them seriously. The worst thing to do is nothing. If you are not a family member, inform his or her family as soon as possible of your concern. Mental health

PCPA promotes a community-based, responsive and viable system of agencies providing quality services for individuals receiving mental health, intellectual disabilities, addictive disease and other related human services.

professionals are available in every Pennsylvania community. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-TALK) is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone. Depression is a chronic mental illness and, like a chronic physical illness, will not disappear with silence and hope. Your action can make a significant difference in the life of a young person.

PCPA is a statewide trade association that promotes a community-based, responsive, and viable system of agencies providing quality services for individuals receiving mental health, intellectual disability, addictive disease, and other related human services. PCPA represents over 225 community-based agencies and related businesses that provide mental health, intellectual and developmental disability, and substance use disorder services for children and adults. Members operate in all 67 Pennsylvania counties and serve more than one million Pennsylvanians per year.

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