

## Media Advisory Thursday, November 29, 2007

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### Colorado Ranks 18th in Study on Depression Status Across the Nation

*First-of-Its-Kind Analysis Links Greater Access to Mental Health  
Treatments and Services to Better Depression Outcomes*

**DENVER, COLORADO (November 29, 2007)** – According to *Ranking America's Mental Health: An Analysis of Depression Across the State*, Colorado ranked **18th** in a first-of-its-kind report by Mental Health America that analyzed rates of depression and suicide among all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

“This report provides an opportunity for Colorado leaders to examine its citizens’ depression status and begin to allocate resources to improve our mental health,” said **Jeanne M. Rohner, President and CEO of Mental Health America of Colorado**. “Colorado can and should provide better treatment and services for our citizens suffering from this chronic illness. Depression is common, real and as the Ranking America’s Mental Health Report shows, it is treatable with adequate resources. Reducing depression in Colorado should be a top priority.”

South Dakota ranked first as the healthiest state with respect to depression status. Following South Dakota were Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana and Minnesota. Utah was ranked last, with the highest depression levels, preceded by West Virginia, Rhode Island, Kentucky and Nevada.

Mental Health America found the following factors to be statistically significantly associated with better depression status and lower suicide rates:

- **Mental health resources** – On average, the higher the number of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers per capita in a state, the lower the suicide rate.
- **Barriers to treatment** – The lower the percentage of the population reporting that they could not obtain healthcare because of costs, the lower the suicide rate and the better the state’s depression status. In addition, the lower the

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percentage of the population that reported unmet mental healthcare needs, the better the state's depression status.

- **Mental health treatment utilization** – Holding the baseline level of depression in the state constant, the higher the percentage of the population receiving mental health treatment, the lower the suicide rate.
- **Socioeconomic characteristics** – The more educated the population and the greater the percentage with health insurance, the lower the suicide rate. The more educated the population, the better the state's depression status.

“The findings of this study underscore the need to develop a public mental health surveillance system to monitor the mental health of Americans by examining depression and the states policies that may impact it,” said Dr. David Shern, president and CEO, Mental Health America. “Only with regular and ongoing measurement of key indicators of depression will we be able to understand how public policies impact a population's depression level and suicide rate – and adjust these policies to benefit the millions of American affected by depression.”

Despite the fact that some states do better than others on rates of depression and suicide, no state can be satisfied with its current status. These rates can be driven lower with state policies designed to improve coverage, ending discriminatory practices in insurance, and assuring that qualified mental health professionals are available to serve everyone in need.”

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### **About Mental Health America of Colorado**

Mental Health America of Colorado, formerly the Mental Health Association of Colorado, is the catalyst and voice for the Colorado mental health movement. Through Education, Advocacy, Outreach and Prevention we provide resources to Coloradoans affected by the entire spectrum of mental health issues.