



New Jersey Association of Mental Health  
and Addiction Agencies, Inc.  
3575 Quakerbridge Road, Suite 102  
Mercerville, NJ 08619  
Phone (609) 838-5488 Fax (609) 838-5489  
[www.njamhaa.org](http://www.njamhaa.org)

Attitudes in Reverse®  
P.O. Box 3127  
Princeton, NJ 08543  
Phone: 609-945-3200  
[www.attitudesinreverse.org](http://www.attitudesinreverse.org)

Contact: Shauna Moses  
Office: 609-838-5488, ext. 204 Cell: 609-903-1526  
E-Mail: [smoses@njamhaa.org](mailto:smoses@njamhaa.org)

## **DHS Commissioner Velez Applauds Partners Who Help Save Lives by Eliminating Stigma, Providing Effective Mental Health Education and Services**

*Commissioner Velez Will Speak at an Event on National Suicide Prevention Day, September 10, 2013*

**MERCERVILLE (September 6, 2013)** – “I applaud the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA), Attitudes in Reverse® (AIR) and all the community-based partners and advocates for their work to eradicate the stigma that often prevents people in crisis from seeking help,” said Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner Jennifer Velez, Esq.

Commissioner Velez will deliver opening remarks at *Back to School: Take a Breath – and Pack a Good Mental Health Tool Kit*, on September 10, 2013, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in DHS’ first floor conference room, 222 South Warren St., Trenton. “How do we tell the people we love that no problem is too big and no situation so desperate that it can’t be faced? That’s the crucial message of this event: that suicide is not the answer,” Commissioner Velez said.

Partners who will attend the event include social workers from the Juvenile Justice Commission; staff from DHS and its Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Department of Children and Families; mental healthcare providers and advocates; counselors, educators and administrators from elementary schools, high schools and colleges; and representatives of pediatric primary healthcare providers.

Commissioner Velez encourages all partners to not only use about the resources offered by NJAMHAA and AIR and share information about them, but also to help raise awareness of the state’s new suicide prevention hotline - NJHOPELINE - 855-654-6735 – where callers can reach live, trained counselors 24 hours a day.

“We are delighted that Commissioner Velez is able to speak to our audience and are grateful for her support of all New Jerseyans’ behavioral health needs. We are also thrilled that the attendees represent the diverse groups we aim to reach in order to increase use of mental healthcare services, which are proven to save and enhance lives,” said NJAMHAA’s CEO Debra Wentz, Ph.D., and Associate Executive Director, Shauna Moses.

**More**

## **DHS Commissioner Velez Applauds Partners Who Help Save Lives/Page 2 of 2**

“This event is a tremendous opportunity for us to build on our mission to save lives by providing education about mental health, related disorders and suicide prevention. Our educational program is also designed to eliminate stigma, which imposes a harmful barrier for youth to seek the services they need – services that can alleviate or prevent hopelessness, which all too often has devastating consequences,” said Tricia and Kurt Baker, Co-Founders of AIR.

\*\*\*

Based in the Greater Trenton, New Jersey area, the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA) is a statewide trade association representing nonprofit behavioral health agencies. Founded in 1951, NJAMHAA represents 180 hospital-based and freestanding providers of mental health and substance use treatment services throughout New Jersey. In aggregate, NJAMHAA members help more than 500,000 children and adults with mental health and substance use issues annually and employ approximately 98,000 members of New Jersey’s workforce. NJAMHAA’s mission is to champion opportunities that advance its members’ ability to deliver accessible, quality, efficient and effective integrated behavioral healthcare services to individuals who have mental illnesses and/or addictions, and their families. NJAMHAA is committed to recovery and wellness for all individuals. For more information about NJAMHAA, please visit [www.njamhaa.org](http://www.njamhaa.org).

Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR) was established by Tricia, Kurt and Katelyn Baker of Plainsboro, NJ, in 2010, soon after their son/brother Kenny completed suicide following a long battle against severe depression and anxiety. Their mission is to save lives by educating students about mental health, related disorders and suicide prevention. In the first two years, they have presented to more than 11,000 students in middle and high schools and colleges in New Jersey and New York, and they have been invited to present at other schools in New Jersey, as well as Georgia and Vermont. AIR also promotes the mental health benefits of dogs and includes dogs in their advocacy and educational program. The organization also has an AIR Dogs: Paws for Minds™ program, through which displaced dogs with the ability to serve as Emotional Support Dogs, which are more than pets, are matched with individuals who have mental illnesses or developmental disabilities, thereby saving two lives with each match. For more information about AIR, please visit [www.attitudesinreverse.org](http://www.attitudesinreverse.org).