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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***'Start' Online Training Contributes to Suicide-Safer Communities***

**Charlottetown, PEI** – The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is promoting a new, online training program that helps community members to have important conversations about mental health, thoughts about suicide and life promotion.

'Start' teaches individuals to recognize warning signs of suicide in others and how to take meaningful action to keep them safe and connected to community resources. The training program takes 90 minutes to complete online and includes options for personal customization, realistic simulations, and interactive content.

CMHA has been offering community-based suicide prevention training and education for more than two decades, but because of COVID-19 restrictions, in-person suicide-care trainings like Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and SafeTALK have not been permitted since March. To adapt to these new realities, CMHA is working in partnership with LivingWorks Education (LWE) to offer 'Start' training to the public at a reduced cost. In addition, LWE is donating 25% of the proceeds from registration fees, back to CMHA PEI to help support local, suicide prevention efforts.

'Start' was recently offered to CMHA PEI staff and volunteers. Suicide Prevention Committee member, Jocelyne Ludgate, took the training and says, "Right now, many of us are concerned about others - we're worried about mental health issues. We need to have effective skills to watch over our friends, family, and co-workers to keep them safe. 'Start' does an excellent job of teaching these skills in a dynamic and engaging way."

CMHA's Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Pat Doyle, says, "Staff and volunteers who took 'Start' training felt more confident to talk to someone about thoughts of suicide and found the training very worthwhile." Doyle added, "Islanders who take the training can also request and schedule a follow-up phone call with one of CMHA's trained staff."

To find out more information about 'Start' please visit CMHA's website at:

<https://pei.cmha.ca/home/suicide-prevention/livingworks-start-training/>

If you or someone you care about is experiencing distress or has thoughts of suicide, the Island Helpline is available 24/7 by calling 1-800-218-2885. Help is also available nationwide by calling the Canadian Suicide Prevention Service toll-free at 1-833-456-4566.

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