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Putnam Agencies Stand Up for National Day Without Stigma

Brewster, NY— Mental health problems are more common than most people think. In fact, one in four Americans has a diagnosable mental health disorder in any given year and these numbers are similar in Putnam County. This October, mental health advocates from the county and around the country are joining together to promote mental health through various observances, including National Day Without Stigma on October 5.

“Government’s role in society is to protect the well-being of its citizens,” says County Executive MaryEllen Odell, “and we have a social and fiscal responsibility to help those with mental health issues. Unaddressed, these issues can lead to serious problems, even suicide. It is the Year of the Family in Putnam County and our focus has been, and always will be, to keep the family unit together. That’s why we established a suicide prevention task force and why it is so important to reduce the stigma often linked to mental illness. Stigma causes shame, leaving people reluctant to seek health.”

“Effective treatments are available for mental health disorders, just as they are for physical illnesses,” explains Health Commissioner Allen Beals, MD. “When someone has a chronic pain or shortness of breath, they visit a physician and seek treatment. It should be the same with mental health issues. Help is available.”

Megan Castellano, executive director of the Mental Health Association in Putnam County, who also co-chairs the suicide prevention task force, agrees. “Stigma is a big stumbling block for both

individuals and families seeking help,” Ms. Castellano says. “As mental health advocates and as community members, we need to keep the dialogue open and ongoing. We need to emphasize that treatments work, and we need to work with primary care providers to increase and normalize mental health screenings as routine.”

These initiatives are part of Putnam County’s Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and its focus on improving mental, emotional and behavioral (MEB) health. Countless provider organizations and agencies are working in partnership on this plan, including the Mental Health Association of Putnam County and the Putnam County Department of Health. For more information on the Mental Health Association of Putnam County, visit: www.mhaputnam.org.

The National Day Without Stigma is a program of Active Minds, a national non-profit dedicated to changing the way society talks about mental health. It supports a network of over 400 student-led chapters on college campuses nationwide. For more information, visit: www.activeminds.org

The National Day Without Stigma coincides with Mental Health Awareness Week, which runs the first full week of October, this year from October 4 through October 10; National Depression Screening Day on October 8, and World Mental Health Day on October 10. Take the pledge to be Stigma-free, visit: www.nami.org and learn more about what you can do.

The Health Department’s mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth, www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam, www.instagram.com/PutnamHealthNY and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.