The 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (NSSP) identifies the need to promote suicide prevention as an essential element of health care services, and the importance of implementing effective practices for assessing and treating individuals at risk of suicide. In support of national efforts to reduce suicide deaths among adults, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Maine Suicide Prevention Program (MSPP) will implement the Communities of Care (CoC) Project, with the goals of increasing access to suicide-safer care for individuals served by primary care and behavioral health services; implementing comprehensive systems change to support suicide screening, assessment, treatment, and follow-up within major community mental health agencies; and developing shared discharge protocols between hospitals, emergency rooms, and regional crisis service providers to ensure rapid follow-up and transition of care for individuals after a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis. Specifically, the MSPP CoC Project will focus efforts in three areas:

• Goal 1: Increase the number of providers within Maine’s Behavioral Health Homes who use evidence-based practices to assess, treat, and manage suicide risk among patients and clients.

• Goal 2: Increase the number of behavioral health systems that implement evidence-based protocols and clinical pathways, using the Zero Suicide framework (Zero Suicide Practice Transformation), for suicide risk screening, intervention, treatment, and follow-up.

• Goal 3: Increase the number of hospitals, emergency rooms, and inpatient behavioral health programs that have developed shared protocols with regional crisis service providers that include procedures for rapid follow-up and care connections for individuals following a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis (Strengthening Supports).

To increase health and behavioral health providers’ skills in evidence-based suicide screening and treatment, MSPP CoC Project staff will partner with the Sweetser Training Institute to create a web-based training portal that provides access to best-practice educational resources in suicide prevention. The MSPP will expand upon these trainings by partnering with two additional major community mental health providers to implement the Zero Suicide model, a quality improvement process that focuses on creating organizational systems and policies to support screening, intervention, treatment, and ongoing follow-up for all clients at risk of suicide. The CoC Project will increase community supports for individuals at high risk by engaging hospitals, emergency rooms, and local crisis service programs to ensure rapid follow-up and supported care transitions for individuals following a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis. The Maine Suicide Prevention Program has a long history of engaging with community partners to provide innovative suicide-prevention interventions across many sectors. The MSPP takes a data-driven approach to implementing high-quality services. As part of the Communities of Care Project, the MSPP will train over 650 health and behavioral health providers in evidence-based suicide prevention practices, and support high-quality suicide-safer care and community follow-up for over 3500 Maine adults. The MSPP believes that these efforts will have a positive impact on the well-being of our communities by reducing Maine’s rate of suicide deaths and suicide attempts.